

*From Mrs Waters
by Rev H. Cary*

SERMONS
ON *Gal 10. 24*
VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY
EDWARD PYE WATERS, A.B.
CURATE OF GREAT BARR,
STAFFORDSHIRE.

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TO
THE HONOURABLE & RIGHT REVEREND
JAMES,
Lord Bishop of Lichfield & Coventry,

THIS VOLUME OF
SERMONS

is,

WITH HIS GRACIOUS PERMISSION,
MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S MUCH OBLIGED,

AND DUTIFUL SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

TO

THE HONOURABLE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON

JAMES

"Lord Bishop of London & Coventry"

THE HONOURABLE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON

DEAR SIR

IN THE HONOURABLE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON

MOST RESPECTFULLY REQUESTED

THE HONOURABLE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON

AND DEAR SIR

THE AUTHOR

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CORRECTIONS & ADDITIONS.

- Page 6, Line 24 Dele *e* in *massacreing*.
- 10 22 For *aims*, read *aimed*.
- 11 13 For *us*, read *ourselves*.
- 11 15 For *assures*, read *assured*.
- 12 11 Before *juß*, insert *the*.
- 12 22 After *ensue*, full stop.
- 20 1 Before *broken*, insert *to be*.
- 25 12 After *collected*, insert *in its plenary sense*.
- 27 5 For *others*, read *persons*.
- 28 20 For *not*, read *scarcely*.
- 36 20 For *confidence*, read *conference*.
- 40 4 After *can*, insert *only*.
- 42 14 After *mankind*, a note of interrogation.
- 44 6 Dele semicolon after *honours*, and put it after *wearied*.
- 45 19 Dele *son of*.
- 47 21 After *our*, insert *own*.
- 51 20 For *mean*, read *mere*.
- 52 5 For *vitiuous*, read *vicious*.
- 54 2 After *deceived*, comma.
- 54 12 For *intention*, read *attention*.
- 55 21 "*there is a certain scale*," &c. vide Milton's
prose works, vol. i. p. 290, &c. Ed. 1753.
- 60 5 After *them*, comma.
- 61 14 After *vieu*, comma.
- 66 17 After *animating*, insert *article of*.
- 69 14 After *it*, comma.
- 70 11 For *comprehended in*, read *composed of*.
- 70 22 After *prescribed*, comma.

Page 77, Line 14	After <i>extent</i> , read <i>of the duty</i> .
79 8	For <i>oppstion</i> , read <i>opposition</i> .
79 11	For <i>admit of</i> , read <i>require</i> .
81 21	For <i>early</i> , read <i>easily</i> .
84 8	Dele comma after <i>continued</i> , and put semicolon.
85 5	For <i>of the greater part</i> , read <i>of a great part</i> .
101 13	For <i>be</i> , read <i>man</i> .
102 16	For <i>on</i> , read <i>in</i> .
111 21	For <i>most</i> , read <i>more</i> .
115 13	After <i>that</i> , insert <i>austere</i> .
118 6	For <i>in general</i> , read <i>in particular</i> .
118 7	For <i>in particular</i> , read <i>in general</i> .
120 6	After <i>word</i> , read <i>that</i> .
120 10	For <i>designs</i> , read <i>sentiments</i> .
120 11	For <i>they</i> , read <i>these innovators</i> .
126 3	For <i>black</i> , read <i>wild</i> .
127 10	After <i> blessings</i> , full stop.
147 1	Read <i>transcendent</i> , for <i>transcendant</i> .
155 1	After <i>and</i> , insert <i>as far as</i> .
157 2	For <i>bounds</i> , read <i>limits</i> .
159 11	Dele <i>the power</i> .
160 16, 17	Dele <i>bound together</i> .
183 2	After <i>entered</i> , read <i>as members of society, and shall justly deserve to be considered as the vindicators, &c.</i>
194 11	Read <i>have</i> , for <i>bad</i> .
196, last line,	Read <i>bearer</i> , for <i>men</i> .
198 16	After <i>pursuits</i> , a semicolon.
201 2	For <i>claims</i> , read <i>claim</i> .



SERMON I.

ACTS, 17 Ch. 23 Verse.

AS I PASSED BY AND BEHELD YOUR DEVOTIONS,
I FOUND AN ALTAR WITH THIS INSCRIPTION,
"TO THE UNKNOWN GOD," WHOM THEREFORE
YE IGNORANTLY WORSHIP, HIM DECLARE I
UNTO YOU.

AT the period when Christianity arose, the city
of Athens had been for ages the admiration
of the world, the seat of the arts and sciences, the
nurse of literature and politeness, and the foun-
tain of law and religion. And though it had be-
gun to decline under the rising splendor of Rome,
and was sinking fast into the insignificance of a
captive State, yet much of its ancient grandeur
remained, and it was still the venerable and beloved
abode of learning and philosophy. The philoso-
phers of that day were, for the most part, divided
into two sects, which held opposite opinions, and

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were

were equally adverse to Christianity, both in principles and practice. One of these, called the Epicurean, devoted to sensual pleasures, would willingly have persuaded men that there was no Providence, no resurrection, no immortality, no judgment. The other, called the Stoical, was rigorous and severe in its precepts, and required a scrupulous correctness of life; but its disciples were haughty and arrogant, and though they believed in the existence of God, and had some idea of a future state, yet proud of their own wisdom and virtue, in their imaginations they almost equalled human nature to the Godhead. Both parties disputed till they had confounded the distinctions of truth and falsehood, and had so perplexed the minds of all plain and honest men, that few or none could distinguish what was right from the heap of sophistry and absurdity with which it was mingled. Yet it appears, that most of these philosophers were desirous of discovering the truth, and that every rank of the Athenians was favourably inclined towards religion. We certainly cannot doubt that the populace was devoutly disposed, if we observe how
much

much they were attached to their gods. The inhabitants of this city followed the Pagan system through all its extravagancies, and acknowledged a catalogue of deities almost infinite; setting up gods not only for the virtues and qualities of the body and mind, but even for forests and trees, for countries and fields, for houses and household furniture.

Into this renowned city entered the holy Apostle St. Paul, a fugitive before his unrelenting persecutors. He entered into it, not as an admiring stranger, who sought for knowledge, but as the Apostle of the Son of God who came to give it. He entered into it, not to become a subtle disputant, in questions of genealogies and of science falsely so called, nor to contend in oppositions of wit and eloquence, nor to invent new and pernicious modes of luxury and voluptuousness; but he entered into it unwearied by his labours and undaunted by his sufferings, deeply convinced of the importance of his mission, and determined to persevere in displaying the light of the gospel to the Gentiles, who still walked in darkness. Though he was no enemy to courteous and refined manners,

and far from being insensible of the advantages of human learning, he came not to acquire qualifications, which were of little value, compared with those which he had to dispense, but to instruct and regulate the thoughts, to cleanse and rectify the heart, to propagate the knowledge of the only true God, and to make the Idolater wise unto salvation.

As he traversed the magnificent streets, and visited the splendid temples of the city, he made it his employment to ascertain the state of religion, and he found gross idolatry every where predominant. Among the many monuments of superstition which met his eyes, he at length beheld an altar inscribed "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD"—an altar dedicated by an unexampled refinement of superstition, to a deity without name or attribute. The spirit of St. Paul seems to have taken fire at this sight, and compassionating such ignorance—ignorance so near the borders of knowledge—he could no longer refuse utterance to the truths of his religion.

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The novelty of his opinions, and the simplicity and earnestness of his manner, failed not to draw the attention of all who frequented the public places where he held his repeated harangues. Some of the Epicureans and Stoics, who affected superior wisdom, treated him with contempt, and asked with a sneer, "what will this babbler say;" others considered him as preaching new gods, under the names of Jesus and the Resurrection, and with that notion took and brought him to the court of Areopagus. This august assembly, composed for the most part of learned, dignified, and virtuous men, whose minds were intent on "the strange things which he had brought to their ears," and eager to gain information concerning the new doctrines whereof he had spoken to them, the Apostle St. Paul, standing in the midst, thus addressed: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious; for as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, 'TO THE UNKNOWN GOD,' whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

The history of mankind affords us numberless proofs of the danger which ensues from the desertion or the violation of the principles of religious truth. And those who are inclined to question the necessity of a nice and anxious investigation of the doctrines of theology, and to quarrel with the precision and scruples of orthodox believers, ought to refer to historical facts before they venture to advance their objections. A loose and vague notion of the nature of the Deity, rather than positive unbelief, was the principal cause of all the absurdities of the Pagan mythology; of all the trifling, lewd, and sanguinary rites of the Gentile world. These absurd fables, which may justly be expected from every mistaken mode of propagating truth, produced in the minds of acute and observant men, an aversion to religion itself. Even since the introduction of Christianity, we have seen men erring from the same cause, the want of accurate knowledge in religion: devoting themselves to perpetual and inactive seclusion, we have seen them establishing the Papal throne of superstition, and bowing before it with a reverence only due to the Throne of Omnipotence; we have seen them massacring
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their brethren, and condemning them to the flames in the midst of solemn mockery and impious exultation. These enormities form an inexhaustible subject of invidious declamation to men who have weakly suffered themselves to argue from such abuses against the real, sound, merciful, and benevolent tenets of the gospel.

I am sorry to observe, that even at this enlightened period, perhaps a stronger resemblance exists between the religious opinions of Christendom and those of the ancient Epicureans and Stoics, than in any age since the propagation of evangelical truth. For do there not exist among us men who can shut their eyes upon the light of heaven and the wonders of nature, and dare to question the very existence of the Almighty Father? Has not a whole powerful and civilized nation, assembled in council, impiously decreed that there is no God? And wherein do the modern philosophers differ from the Epicureans of old, except it be, that their vices are more gross, more savage, more audaciously avowed? Again, we have a race

of sceptics, who probably without bad intention, and wanting rather knowledge than zeal, perplex themselves with endless disputations, and with respect to religion hang balanced in perpetual doubt, "like children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." It is, indeed, one of the evils inseparable from the present refined state of society, that men become fastidious and fanciful in their opinions, and that they rather pay attention to doctrines which, by their novelty and strangeness, amuse the imagination, than to those, which being built on the immoveable foundations of truth, must ever remain uniform and the same in substance and appearance.

Others there are, who, like the Stoics, deny not God, nor his attributes, by their words, but contradict their belief by their practice;—"presumptuous and self-willed," and in no wise regardful of the providence of heaven, these men rely entirely on the powers of the understanding, and ascribe that glory to themselves which is due to God. Such errors as these have a direct tendency to Atheism,
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and are much more blameable than the errors of the Athenian philosophers, who had not the light of revelation to guide them in their researches.

But it is not only atheistical opinions which prevail in the present day. Though the more glaring absurdities of idolatry have disappeared wherever Christianity has diffused itself, yet there are many who worship God ignorantly. But he that serves God in ignorance, is not far removed from an idolater, and stands in great danger of falling, one day or other, into the worship of false gods. Who has penetrated into the sanctuaries of the Romish church, and has seen men that profess themselves worshippers of the one true God, making prayers and offerings, and prostrating themselves at the feet of senseless images of wood or stone, the miserable representation of some martyred saint, or of the crucified Redeemer;—who has seen or heard of this, and has not thought that the times of Gentile darkness are not yet passed by? Who again has entered into the conventicles among us, and has listened to men that profess themselves

ministers

ministers of that God who requires a reasonable service, venting the most profane absurdities under the name of gospel truths; and has seen them distorting their features and convulsing their frames, as if impassioned gesture, wild declamation, and "jesting not convenient," could promote the real interests of a mild, chaste, and rational religion? Who, I say, has beheld this, without anticipating the corruption it is likely to introduce into our religious discipline; without deprecating that ignorance of the true doctrine and practice of the Christian church which will probably ensue, if the oracles of God should ever be entrusted to the ignorant and deluded advocates of enthusiasm?

If we still want stronger instances, and more undeniable evidence of the ill effects which must result from superficial and undefined notions in religion, we may draw them all from a consideration of the late, and partly of the present state of affairs in the sister kingdom. From a dire union of atheism and bigotry, a conspiracy was formed, and in some degree at present exists, which aims at
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the destruction of the powers of religion and all legitimate authority. Had the children of this people been taught from their infancy, to reverence the oracles of religion, to study and meditate on the awful truths delivered in them, to know God, and to serve him, we should not have seen them plunging their daggers in the bosoms of their fellow subjects, and affiancing themselves with the propagators of false philosophy and infidelity.

Let us beware, lest a neglect or omission of an early and sound education of every rank of the community, in the true principles of religion, draw down upon us a similar punishment. It is an awful saying, but the course of nature and the word of God assures us of its truth, that punishment temporal, as well as eternal, must follow every dereliction or abuse of the truth. We have all heard the denunciation of God, that he will visit the sins of the fathers upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate him: and let me ask, whether every one of us has not beheld its accomplishment in some instance and degree or other?

other? Do not the follies, the extravagancies, the intemperance, the debaucheries of the sinner, entail poverty, contempt, disease and misery upon his unoffending posterity? Such in this world are the punishments of any considerable aberration from the paths of virtue; what they are in another world, it is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty; but if accumulated ideas of eternal destruction, agony and remorse, can alarm us, the pages of scripture abound with such. It signifies nothing to plead the difficulty of acquiring just and necessary knowledge of religion; the Bible is open to us, the churches are open to us, the works of the wisest and best of men are open to us; and let us remember the mercy of God is great, where there is an intention of doing right; but the justice of God is also terrible, where there is a wilful neglect and disobedience. Upon the whole, it appears, that truth resides in one fixed point, and that by the ordinance of God, whether men sceptically stop short of it, or superstitiously rush beyond it, confusion and ruin must ensue; so necessary is moderation, even in the acquisition of good; so indispensable

dispensable even in the noblest pursuit of man, the study of religious truth. And this consideration leads me to the opinion, that were men more cautious and exact, more distrustful of their impetuous passions than they usually are in their search after truth, the religious opinions of mankind would approach much nearer to unity than has ever yet been witnessed.

If, therefore, there be such danger of falling into extremes, it may be asked, where are we to look for pure and undefiled religion; is it within the pale of the established church? Most assuredly there, if any where. But, I fear, if the question was put to all the congregations of this island, notwithstanding the judicious and zealous instruction of their pastors, whether they are generally so well acquainted with the rudiments of religion, that, leaving the principles, they are able to go on to the perfection of the knowledge of God, I fear, that so far from the question being answered in the affirmative, it would be necessary that the greater part should be reprov'd in the words of the Apostle St. Paul, "When for the time ye ought to be

be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat."

I fear that, though we acknowledge a God, and pay our devotions to him, yet that he is too often worshipped ignorantly; that he is an unknown God, whose name and power we faintly recollect at intervals, and quickly forget.

If this outline of the present state of religion be correctly drawn, it will afford incentives of the strongest kind to rekindle in us the spirit of true devotion. If we dread the renewal of that worse than Egyptian darkness, which once covered the Pagan world; if we shudder at the thoughts of the repetition of all the dark, obscene and barbarous rites of idolatry; the abuse of human nature, and of natural affection; the torture and murder of human victims; the sacrifice of children by their own parents; if we would preserve our morals unstained by the abominable corruption of the Gentiles, and unviolated by the sacrilegious principles of modern philosophy: if, again, we would keep our minds unclouded, and

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our hearts uncontracted by the gloomy and narrow superstitions of the church of Rome, and of every communion which "holds the truth in unrighteousness," *sound* knowledge must be promoted amongst us, and just and accurate notions must be formed both with regard to the nature and extent, the doctrines and practice of religion. These are the points in which every man is concerned to be well instructed; and if we believe that there is any truth, any reality in religion, if we think that there is but the most distant chance of its being true, I am at a loss to know upon what principle we shall reconcile it to ourselves to be indifferent on this subject. Religion involves all our best and dearest interests in this life, and in that which is to come: it offers salvation, it threatens destruction; but if any man obstinately chuses to incur the hazard of eternal condemnation, rather than make it the subject of his consideration, who shall prevent him? Who shall check the madman in his career, and convince him of his madness? Every warning should be made use of, every persuasive exerted; but if all human means fail, we must surrender the thought-

thoughtless and prejudging infidel into the hands of God, who alone is able to control the perverse and gainsaying children of men.

But of you, my brethren, we will hope better things. We trust, that neither like the proud philosophers of old, you will reject all thoughts of religion as the vain dreams of disturbed imaginations, nor yet, like the deluded and superstitious populace, run with itching ears after strange Gods and false prophets, and pollute the purity of religion by an intermixture of idolatrous rites and superstitious observances.

There is in religion, as in the circumstances of society, a golden mean, and as the happiest climate of the world lies between the extremes of heat and cold, so also, in religion, is there a temperate zone, equally distant from the fervor of enthusiasm and the coldness of infidelity; most kindly to the growth and produce of religious knowledge, and favourable to the encouragement of every good and pious affection. In this temperature is situated the church of England, thus established in the remotest

remotest point from every extreme. Therein have the truths of religion been the most securely and profitably studied, and therein have flourished the fairest examples of ardent faith and unsullied righteousness.

May, the Almighty grant us grace ever to hold fast the form of sound words which we have received therein, and to follow the example of those of his servants who have departed this life in the true faith; "and this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

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SERMON II.

JOHN, 3 Ch. part of the 19th Verse.

**LIGHT IS COME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN
LOVED DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT.**

THE prevailing error under which the world seems to labour in the present day, is a fondness for discovering other principles of action, and other motives for virtue, than those which the doctrine and example of Jesus Christ will warrant.

It shall be my endeavour, therefore, to shew, that the boasted lights of philosophy and natural religion, which men have been so desirous of substituting in the place of the christian revelation, are in reality lost in the illumination which that revelation has spread over the darkness of the world: that all other obligations to goodness, except the

covenant of our holy faith, are lax and easily broken through; and that every character which is formed upon principles distinct from revealed religion, and unconnected with it, will form but a melancholy contrast with the character of the true Christian.

The fundamental mistake upon which the fanciful theories of this philosophy have been built, seems to lie in too exalted an opinion of the powers of the understanding, and too secure a reliance on the good qualities of the heart. But the powers of the human mind, unassisted by revelation, mighty as they may appear to us at first view, are in reality but little superior to the instinct which governs animals; and the good qualities of the heart, unless purified by religion, shew themselves only in transient and momentary gleams, and are frequently obscured by the dark and sullen passions. It is true, that mankind have learned to penetrate the bowels of the earth, to traverse the sea in ships, and to trace the courses of the heavenly bodies: it is true, that men may be found, versed in abstruse calculations, powerful in argument, and sagacious in observation.

tion. But what are all the inventions of the ingenious, and the reflections of the wise, able to effect, when the riches and wisdom of the creation are to be fathomed? We trace with weak and faltering steps, a few degrees of the immense design, but quickly find ourselves lost and bewildered in the greatness and magnificence of the subject. In the investigation of the important questions which are comprehended under the venerable name of religion, the mind cannot advance far by its own strength, nor discover truth without the aid of revelation. Without the revelation of God, we cannot know why we were born into this calamitous world for the apparent purpose of enduring toil, sickness and pain, alleviated but seldom by uncertain and fleeting moments of enjoyment: we know not for what purpose, reason, so slow in growth, so frail when grown, is given to us, which exposes the misery of life, without enabling us sufficiently to relieve it. In short, without revelation, we know not, and can scarcely conjecture why we exist at all. What then is the mighty advantage communicated to us by the faculties of

the mind? I repeat, that unless we exert them as revelation has commanded us, and apply them as instruments to convince ourselves of the truths of religion, they will serve us less effectually than the instinct which compels the brute animal to provide for its own safety and welfare. Let us then distrust the specious displays of human ingenuity, with which the world is filled: the knowledge which is thus imparted to us, is, indeed, by no means to be despised; but let us reckon upon it as of *secondary* importance, when we attempt to account for the manifold inconsistencies of life, and enter upon the interesting topic of religion.

But it may be asked, if the *understanding* be deficient, is not the *heart* of man possessed of that innate goodness which leads him immediately to love and practise whatever is good? To confute this notion, let us refer the advocate of natural goodness to his self-examination before the tribunal of his own conscience, and let him deny, if he can, those evil inclinations and polluted desires, which at times contaminate the imagination of every man. Did he never swell with pride? Did he never
thirst

thirst for revenge? Did anger never tyrannize over his feelings? Did he never writhe under the pangs of envy? Did he never indulge in the filthy lusts of concupiscence? Did he never enjoy a gloomy satisfaction in the distresses of his friends? Alas! my brethren, not even the sublime doctrines of christianity can totally eradicate the evil passions from our hearts; we are fallen from original purity, and whatever we do to retrieve that purity, may be acceptable to the mercy of God, but can never be considered as satisfactory to his justice. The followers of the light of nature, have, indeed, recommended an excellent code of morality, but whence was it taken? From the system of morality which revealed religion has established. The sceptic has learned to enforce all the duties enjoined by the decalogue; but whence did he acquire his knowledge of those duties? not from the light of nature, but from the revelation of God. There are some virtues which the light of nature might point out as fit and necessary, but if we had leisure to examine them, we should find that they are such as spring from the universal instinct of self-preser-

vation and the great law of retaliation, which the convenience of society seems to have rendered necessary even in the earliest periods of the world. But if we leave these common duties, of which the practice is as advantageous, as the neglect is dangerous, and call to mind those of a sublimer nature, which have been introduced by revelation, we shall perceive at once the deficiency of natural religion.

If we look accurately into history, we shall find that the world, in the first ages, had but a very vague and indistinct sense of right and wrong, and that no people possessed a perfect knowledge of the common precepts of morality, except the Israelites—"God had shewed his word unto Jacob, and his statutes and judgments unto Israel, but he had not dealt so with any other nation, neither had the Heathen any knowledge of his laws." What a debauched and flagitious race of men were the inhabitants of the seven promised countries, who, after having been repeatedly, but vainly, warned from God, were at length, for the enormity of their sins, delivered up to be extirpated by
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the hand of his chosen people. Where then was the boasted light of nature, which could not lay open to these miserable people the paths of righteousness, nor rescue them from the gulph of destruction? Again, from what unwritten law has the follower of nature been instructed not only to forgive, but to forget faults; not only to love friends and strangers among mankind, but even enemies. This heavenly precept of universal love, is directly contrary to the bias of human nature. It is a precept which could only be collected from the doctrines of christianity, and the example of Jesus Christ, and it was never fully and clearly inculcated among the duties of mankind, till after the promulgation of our most holy faith. As a proof of this, listen to the melancholy description which St. Paul gives of the state of the Gentiles, in his exhortation to the converted Ephesians: "This, I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them,

them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." The philosophical code of morality, is, therefore, borrowed from revealed religion; but the subtle philosopher represents his doctrines as springing from the common course of things, and disingenuously attempts to conceal the source of his information, by depreciating those writings from whence it is derived.

But, beside the natural sense of moral obligation, which we have shewn to be weak and insufficient, the adversaries of revelation have brought forward another phantom, which is called *honour*. I mean that species of honour which sets itself up as independent of religion. This much cherished principle, when stripped of its outward covering, will be found to be composed of nothing but the pride of man dilated to its utmost extent. Pride, when not tempered and corrected by the precepts of Christianity, introduces much evil. A man of honour is jealous of his word, brave, spirited, and generous;

generous; but he is at the same time irascible; impatient, haughty, and vindictive. A man of honour is punctual in the discharge of debts for which his word is passed; but he neglects the just claims of many others, and rather than disobey the calls of honour, would see ruin fall upon their heads. Honour teaches him not to dread the commission of murder, when sanctioned by the name of duelling; or when the load of life becomes wearisome, not to shudder at the perpetration of suicide, unawed by the apprehension of hurrying into the presence of the Almighty with all his sins unrepented of. What dependence then is to be placed upon a principle so wavering and inconstant, thus unable to separate evil from good, and thus prompt to respect vice under the semblance of virtue?

There is yet another principle, by which the practice of goodness is supposed to be enforced strongly, which may be called *expediency*. It is convenient for the welfare of society, that laws should be enacted to restrain the overbearing passions and evil propensities of men. But it is manifest, that

no human laws can extend so far as to reach the private duties of a man to himself. The laws of this country, which are eminently framed for the maintenance of good order and the promotion of virtue, cannot restrain debauchery. What law prevents the indulgence of ebriety within private walls? What law prevents the gratification of lust, when concealed from the public eye? It is unquestionably the interest of men to cherish and encourage virtue; but well convinced as they are of this grand truth, how few are there who have presence of mind enough to discern accurately, upon all occasions, the differences of good and evil;—how few who have resolution sufficient to practise in themselves the restraint which such a knowledge would impose? If the law of expediency were sufficient to deter mankind from evil deeds, why does sin exist at all in the world? Self-interest, combined with every other support, even with that of Christianity itself, is not capable of withstanding the overwhelming torrent of iniquity that threatens to deluge the world.

If

If then the mind of man be so limited in its operations, that he cannot proceed far under its direction; if the heart of man be so subjected to the dominion of evil passions, that he cannot place an unguarded confidence in its good qualities; if the only pure and perfect system of morality be not the *invention* of *men*, but the *revelation* of *God*; if the principles of honour and self-interest, unsupported by religious motives, form but a weak barrier against the incessant incursions of iniquity—the general inference will be, that some more powerful principles must be sought to regulate our conduct, and to support us through the trials of life.

In the gospel we have such principles delivered to us from God himself, which we cannot reject without incurring the blame of wilful incredulity and impious doubt. We have such principles contained in revealed religion, in the belief of an omniscient God, the imitation of an all-perfect Saviour, and the expectation of a blessed immortality. Why then shall we be willing to cast off an infallible guide?

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guide? Providence has certainly implanted in us good desires as well as evil, and a distinguishing sense of right and wrong: it is, therefore, our duty to cherish the seeds of virtue, and to cultivate the powers of our understanding. But in executing the charge thus intrusted to us, let us not forget that we are altogether the creatures of God, and subject to the control of his almighty hand: let us not forget that we are fallible, and the slaves of ignorance and error, lest we should attempt to usurp the office of our Creator, and to substitute in the place of his eternal and unchangeable laws, the distempered fancies of human imagination.

We have in the gospel of Christ every command, every admonition, every comfort which is needful for our well-doing in this world, and our salvation in the next. Let it then be the study of our lives to make full advantage of the glorious light which has thus been vouchsafed to us from heaven. By this let our steps be directed through this valley of the shadow of death: to this let us look up with reverence

verence and submission, with hope and faith, with confidence and assurance—so that in the last day, at the tribunal of heaven, we may not tremble, but rejoice at the final sentence, when the awful alternative will be inexpressible happiness, or misery for ever and ever.

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SERMON III.

JOSHUA, 1 *Cb. 8 Verse.*

**THIS BOOK OF THE LAW SHALL NOT DEPART OUT
THY MOUTH, BUT THOU SHALT MEDITATE
THEREIN DAY AND NIGHT, THAT THOU MAY-
EST OBSERVE TO DO ACCORDING TO ALL THAT
IS WRITTEN THEREIN, FOR THEN THOU SHALT
MAKE THY WAY PROSPEROUS, AND THEN
THOU SHALT HAVE GOOD SUCCESS.**

WHEN Moses had conducted the Israelites through the dangers of the wilderness, and having conquered the princes of Moab, had encamped upon the banks of Jordan, he perceived that the purposes of his mission were completed, and that nothing now remained but to appoint his successor. He therefore selected Joshua, the son of Nun, "a man full of the spirit of wisdom," laid his hands upon him and presented him to the children of Israel as their future leader. Imme-
diately

diately after he had discharged this last duty, and had bestowed a parting benediction upon his people, he ascended to the top of Mount Pisgah, and having once blessed his eyes with the beautiful prospect before him, he resigned his spirit to the Lord, in the hope of entering into a happier land of promise than that before him, even into the realms of everlasting happiness.

The office which thus devolved upon Joshua required every exertion of wisdom, courage, and resolution. It was a task of the utmost hazard to invade the Canaanites, to subdue a mighty and warlike people, who had already fortified their cities, and assembled their forces. Nay, we find that there was need of more than human abilities; for no sooner was Joshua invested with his new office, than the Lord thought fit to speak unto him, to confirm him in his command, Captain of the hosts of Israel, to rouse him into action, and to assure him of success. And that he might not plead ignorance in excuse for neglect, the Almighty points out the means by which alone he could secure

cure victory to his arms: "only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand nor to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest;" and, in the words of the text, "this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein, for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

Now, my brethren, may we not with propriety, and under the sanction of the sacred penmen, consider ourselves as placed in a situation resembling that of the leader of the Israelites? Was Joshua, with his countrymen, destined to conquer the rich and glorious land of promise? So are we, the soldiers of religion, united in one cause, and empowered to contend for the possession of a better country—the heavenly Canaan. Was Joshua compelled to force his way through all the difficulties of war, to defeat ambuscades, to discomfit armies,

to level with the ground the walls of fenced cities? So we have the deceit and temptation, the malice and opposition of the world to overcome. Was Joshua endangered by the folly and treachery of his own people? So we may be deluded and betrayed by our own passions. Was Joshua ignorant of the country into which he penetrated, and exposed to dangers from the experience and local knowledge of the enemy? So we are liable to disasters from the blindness and insufficiency of natural reason, and from the vigilance and craftiness of our adversary the devil. Did the spirit of the Lord enter into the heart of Joshua, and fill him with a godlike courage? So also the Comforter is at hand "to strengthen us with might in the inner man." Was Joshua sent to the contest instructed by God himself, and provided with the book of life and of eternal wisdom? So also, though we be not admitted like him into personal confidence with God, yet we have a fuller and more satisfactory dispensation, an additional and more glorious revelation, communicated to us by a nobler messenger than the prophet Moses.

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And the comparison does not end here. Joshua had these difficulties to encounter, these assistances to strengthen him: he conquered, and was rewarded: had he failed, disgrace and punishment would, in all probability, have been the consequence. We have equal obstacles to remove, and equally gracious aids to support us; but herein the cases differ, that we have a greater prize to contend for: if we succeed, our reward will be proportionably greater; and, on the other hand, if we fail, our shame will be in the same measure more poignant, and our sentence more tremendous. If, therefore, it was incumbent upon Joshua to avail himself of the instrument of success which was given to him from heaven, it is in an equal, if not greater degree our duty to employ strenuously that which is called the sword of the spirit, which, in like manner, has been put into our hands by the goodness of God. To speak in plainer terms, it is the indispensable duty of every Christian to make the holy scriptures his study.

If we look into the world, we see that men entertain very different opinions in matters of religion,

ligion, and we readily discover that many of them are gone far away from the truth. For as long as there are men of corrupt hearts in the world, as long as there are men of different abilities, inclinations, and interests, so long it will be necessary that there should be some general and acknowledged standard by which it may be absolutely determined what doctrines are just and true. Shall we make use of reason for this purpose? Reason is not equal to the office. Reason cannot tell us for what end man lives in the world, nor with what worship God is pleased; nor can it inform us why the all-merciful Creator permits evil to prevail; why the wicked man enjoys prosperity, and the good man suffers adversity; nor can it ascertain upon what terms the Almighty will pardon us; nor yet afford us any certainty of a future state. The uses of reason, in matters of religion, are principally these: it will prevent us from being deceived, when any thing is offered to our belief, as coming from God; and will enable us to determine whether we have sufficient proof to justify our receiving it as such: it will instruct us also to determine whether the
ways

ways by which it appears that God has made his will known to mankind, are such as no man, of common understanding, ought to call in question. It is the faculty of reason which convinces us, that the truths of scripture proceeded from God; that the persons to whom he made revelations of his will at sundry times and in divers manners, were instructed by him to record them in certain books; that these holy persons were assisted by the infallible spirit of God; that the books which we receive as scripture, were written by those authors to whom they are ascribed, and that they have descended to us true and genuine. Reason will also furnish us with certain rules, by which we may be qualified to discover the true meaning of the scriptures, and to interpret them sometimes literally, according to the plain sense of the words; at other times with more latitude, according to the general tenor of the passage. In questions like these, reason is properly employed, and can give satisfactory information. But when we attempt to pass the borders of the world, to view the secrets of the creation, to scan the mysteries of religion, and to gaze upon

the throne of the living God, can reason be our guide? Certainly not. The province of reason is narrow, and confined within impassable barriers: it can conduct us to a certain point, and shew that there are unmeasurable regions beyond its knowledge.

But while we guard against the mischiefs of presumptuous curiosity, let us be cautious lest indifference betray us into the opposite and more dangerous extreme, the gulph of religious ignorance. We ought to advance our knowledge as far as we can with modesty and humility. God has kindly given us his revelations to supply the defects of our reason, and to prevent our abusing the great blessings of the understanding. We cannot surely be so brutal and unfeeling as to neglect so precious a benefit, so senseless as to despise the gift of an all-wise and powerful benefactor, so befuddled as to disregard the terrible resentment of an insulted God. Whether we are in the number of those happier persons who make knowledge their delight, or of those whose actions
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are governed by the generous principle of religious love, or of those who shrink, with fear, from the terrors of the Lord: if right principles, of any kind, influence our hearts; if religion occupies any portion of our thoughts, let us search the scriptures, and whatever may be our wants or desires, all will be satisfied from that never-failing fountain of knowledge. Are we anxious to attain to the knowledge of the great Creator, and to discover his purposes and gracious designs? Would we know how sin and wickedness, sickness, misery and death, came into the world; how man lost his original innocence, and what terms of reconciliation, God, with astonishing beneficence, has proposed to his fallen creatures: do we proceed to enquire how God redeemed us by his Son Jesus Christ, and in what way the Holy Spirit contributes to our redemption: would we be informed what will be the state of the souls and bodies of ourselves and our brethren, when we shall have quitted this world, and shall be no longer seen among men: would we acquaint ourselves with the future consequences of our conduct in this life, whether

whether rewards will crown our virtues and punishments fall upon our vices? The word of God will furnish answers to all these awful questions. Thus the scriptures are "profitable for doctrine."—Again, have we fallen into error by supposing religion too easy or too hard a service, by suiting its doctrines to our own interest or convenience, by divesting God of his attributes, or assigning him such as are inconsistent with his Majesty, by profanely imagining that he is careless of this world, and watches not over the children of men; or superstitiously believing, that he is a God that delights in slaughter, and riots in the blood and destruction of mankind; on whichever side we have wandered from the truth, the word of God alone is able to reclaim us: Thus the scriptures are "profitable for reproof." If, however, corruption has sunk so deep into our dispositions, that our conversation is grievously defiled with the taint of vice; if the love of virtue has decayed in us, and that of sensual indulgence and selfish interests has established itself in its stead; if our thoughts and wishes, and actions, are devoted to
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the service of iniquity, yet, even in this case, desperate as it may seem, if we are not totally given up to a reprobate mind; if we are not altogether aliens from the life of God; if any painful sense remains of our miserable condition, any secret wish and involuntary desire for such gracious counsel as might relieve us from the burden of our wickedness, then also, the remedy must be sought in the pages of holy writ. The disorders of sin yield only to the powers of religion. Thus, the scriptures are "profitable for correction."—Again, are we solicitous that our practice should correspond with our belief; would we clearly comprehend the system of the duties of man to God, to his neighbour, and to himself; are we desirous of acquiring that perfection of righteousness, which will qualify us for the enjoyment of heaven? then must we study our Bible: for that alone points out the precise path of virtue, and sets up on high certain land-marks for direction, so that if we err, our error must be wilful. Thus, the scriptures are "profitable for instruction in righteousness."

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Does the consideration of the shortness, the uncertainty, the pain, the trouble, the vanity of human life distress us? Are we struggling with accumulated misfortunes, poor, naked, hungry, persecuted, destitute? Are we discontented amidst pleasures, riches and honours; listless, disgusted, wearied, what shall renovate our hope, and make our cheerfulness to flow again? Be assured, there is but one effectual relief for the sorrows and vexations of life, and that is the study of religion; or, in other words, of the holy scriptures. Who is he, that plunged into the lowest depths of despair and anguish, upon the opening of this book of comfort, feels not his heart lightened, so that he looks upon his misfortunes with a more complacent eye, and can perceive the desire of life and happiness rekindle in him? Thus, the scriptures are "profitable for comfort."

Since, therefore, the sacred writings appear in every point of view necessary and sufficient for our earthly happiness and eternal salvation, how great is the obligation, how great the advantage of studying

studying them ! But let us not deceive ourselves. The greatest good may be improperly and unprofitably used. It will be of more advantage to read a little with attention, than to read a great deal, and be nothing the wiser for it. It is better to read the scriptures occasionally, with a proper temper and frame of mind, than to study them profoundly, without a due submission of the understanding and will. It should never be forgotten, that the grand object of the scriptures is to make men wise unto salvation ; and that it is God himself, either by the mouth of his prophets, or of his beloved Son, that condescends therein to be our instructor. If we think of them as the written words of God, surely it will work some seriousness in us ; and if we consider them at all as a divine revelation, we can receive them no other-wise than as the very words of the all-perfect, all-wise, all-powerful, eternal Son of God. Do we treat with respect, and hear with attention, and obey with alacrity, the mandates of earthly princes, and shall we lightly regard, and carelessly receive, the precepts of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords,

Lords, of him who from his throne beholdeth all them that dwell on the earth? So far from shewing such indecent, such impious, and such infatuated levity, we ought ever, when the Bible is before us, to read it with minute attention; with unfeigned reverence; with an entire submission of our hearts and minds; with a sincere desire of practising what is there declared to be the will of God; with a particular and unsparing application of what we read to ourselves, and our own concerns.

I am the more earnest in thus describing what frame of mind is necessary for the profitable discharge of the great duty of studying the scriptures, because I know that it is very possible that a man may have a very extensive acquaintance with texts of scripture, and yet derive little saving knowledge from them. The greatest hypocrites can call in a text to aid their designs: the wildest enthusiasts can vindicate their extravagancies by a text: nay, the avowed debauchee can find, perhaps, a text to justify or palliate his excesses. But let these men beware; such practices are of all others

others the most dangerous to religion, to mankind, and to themselves. "Woe unto them, saith Isaiah, that call evil good, and good evil, that put darkness for light, and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Woe unto those men who pervert the use of the scriptures, by profane ridicule and audacious mockery; who put an occasion to fall in their brother's way, and make that holy book an incentive to vice, which was given to us as the perfect law of righteousness. But let us, my brethren, flee from interpreters so weak, contemptible and wicked, and let it be our constant endeavour to read these sacred records with a steady view to their undoubted and benevolent intention, which is man's salvation; never disdain to consult those, who, from superiority of learning and abilities, or from eminence in virtue and religion, claim our regard and deference. Let the frequency of our endeavours in this service, compensate for the imperfection of them, and let not our views be terminated by our benefit, but let them be extended to the improvement of all those who are under our influence.

Finally,

Finally, let us ever pray with fervency, that the "blessed Lord who has caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning, will grant that we may, all of us, in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them; that by patience and comfort of his holy word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which he has given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ." Amen.

SERMON



SERMON IV.

GENESIS, 3 *Ch. part of the 19th Verse.*

IN THE SWEAT OF THY FACE SHALT THOU EAT
BREAD.

WHEN the Almighty, in his anger, laid his curse on our first parents, he did not doom them to a condition of irretrievable misery. It is one of those transcendent properties by which the Creator is distinguished from his creatures, that in "his wrath he thinketh upon mercy." As soon as the feeling of resentment has taken possession of the human breast, it naturally seeks for the gratification of revenge, and is therefore far from admitting any consideration for the good of the object from whence the offence has proceeded. But in the divine nature the case is very different. If it is offended with man, the provocation is chiefly occasioned by his neglect of his own welfare, and suitably to so gra-

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cious

cious a disposition, the chastisement is rather that of a wise father, than a severe judge, and is intended less to punish than to correct. These observations are strictly consonant to the tenor of that sentence which was passed on the first grievous transgression of human nature. When the bitter pains of travail were denounced against the woman, she had the consolation to know, that the fruit of her womb was destined, at some future period, to triumph over her seducing foe, and that the manner of her punishment would become subservient to the future restoration of her offspring. In the same spirit, when the man is threatened with sorrow and labour, and a barren soil, the bitterness of the divine wrath is not unmingled with the sweetness of the divine mercy, and the most effectual means of avoiding that evil which he has brought on himself, are discovered in the very sentence pronounced on him, and his curse appears eventually to be converted into a blessing. Of those virtues, indeed, which more immediately relate to the constitution of human society, there are few more respectable

respectable and useful than industry, which takes its rise from this declaration of the Almighty will. It is in some way connected with most other virtues, and when it holds its proper rank among them, is directed to due objects, and contained within due limits, it is equally beneficial to individuals and to communities, and promotes alike the happiness of the citizen, and the prosperity of the state. To these points, I shall now endeavour to call your attention. After having defined the nature of the duty itself, and marked out the proper boundaries of its action, I shall attempt to shew the good effects it produces, both as to its influence on the lives and principles of those who practise it, and on the security and grandeur of the community where it most generally prevails.

By industry, in the common and right acceptation of the word, is meant the persevering and honest pursuit of any laudable and useful attainment. Confined in its origin to the mean exertions necessary for procuring food and raiment, it has since extended itself to the satisfaction of

most of those various wants, which have been superinduced by the improved state of society; and the praise of industry may fairly be allowed to the diligent exercise of those arts, which are conducive to luxury, except such luxury as is plainly vicious. The measure by which to regulate the practice of this virtue, and the boundaries within which we are to contain it, are less easily ascertained. But, like other virtues, it consists in a due medium, and is placed between obstinate eagerness on the one hand, and supine indifference on the other. As it forbids us to render our powers useless by want of employment, and unnerve them by relaxation, so it does not require us to keep them always on the stretch, and impair them by too much exertion. It does not prompt us to encounter insuperable difficulties, or aim at that which is beyond our strength; but instructs us rather to proportion the object of our pursuit to the extent of our faculties, and to consider less what we desire than what we are most likely to attain. We see that it was evidently designed in the benevolent dispensations of Providence, that those things

things which stand in the first scale of necessity, should also be most level to ordinary capacities, and that there should be a reciprocal progression maintained between the powers and the wants of man. The same nature which has spread the simplest and most wholesome food in abundance over the earth; which has adapted almost every soil to the produce of grain, and supplied every plain with water, has rendered the more highly flavoured fruits, of slower growth and more difficult culture. In the intellectual and moral world, we behold an equal display of wisdom and goodness. Those virtues which are necessary for salvation, demand no singular emergency to call them into action, but are easily to be practised in the ordinary intercourse of life. In the application of our industry, we should have regard to this constitution of things. We should despise nothing, because it may at first seem obvious and common. It is even the safer side to make choice of a pursuit, which, to ourselves, appears below our ability, as we are too often led to over-rate our own powers; and of those who enter on an undertaking, to which

they conceive themselves decidedly superior, fewer will find themselves deceived than of those who make too nice and strained a calculation on their supposed capacity. Besides, it will afterwards be more safe and honourable to advance than to retreat; to extend our views and enlarge our plans, as we proceed, than to be forced to acknowledge our presumption, by departing from our first professions and abandoning our first designs.

When we have, after mature deliberation, fixed on the object to which our efforts are to be directed, we must not suffer our intention to be decoyed by what may seem more pleasing, or even more useful; for the diligent prosecution of a pursuit of inferior utility, is preferable to the momentary impulse from the appearance of some more important advantage. Another caution to be observed is, that we do not impose on ourselves by an ostentatious display of preparations and an air of consequence conferred on trifles, so far as to believe ourselves industrious, while we are in truth wasting away our time in idle and ridiculous insignificance.

significance. As men are apt to estimate their powers too highly before they engage in any project, so they frequently continue to favour the delusion, and attribute an imaginary importance to exertions which are, in themselves, very weak and insufficient. To remedy this error, it will be expedient to compare our actual progress with that of others who are pursuing the same track. If we discover ourselves to be at a considerable distance behind them, let us no longer flatter ourselves with dreams of fancied excellence, but acknowledge with honest shame, and amend, with earnest sincerity, our vanity and our mistake. But still, after this just and prudent adaptation of our pursuits to our endowments, and after this exact scrutiny into the real proficiency we have made, something yet remains to be carefully considered. We must remember, that industry, however good in itself, is also to be viewed in the relation it bears to other things which are also good. It has been admirably said, that "there is a certain scale of duties, there is a certain hierarchy of upper and

lower commands, which, for want of studying in right order, all the world is in confusion." In this scale let industry have due place. In this hierarchy, let her neither be exalted above, nor degraded beneath her becoming station. As the companion and assistant of the noblest virtues, she justly claims the foremost rank. But when employed on some mean object, or made subservient to some unworthy passion, such as pride or avarice, she is willing to engross our whole attention, and exact our undivided homage; let us be careful how we comply with so unreasonable a demand. Such prostitution of talents does not, indeed, merit the appellation of industry. Her interests should never be suffered to interfere with those of morality and devotion. He, who by the ardor of his attention to a favourite scheme, is induced to violate or neglect any duty to God or man, had much better have continued unprofitably busy, or sluggishly inactive, than have thus sacrificed a consideration of the highest, to one of much lower importance. Whatever be the sphere of life in
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which our own choice, or the will of Providence may have placed us, it should be our endeavour to render ourselves respectable in that sphere by undeviating assiduity. But, at the same time, it behoves us never to forget, that we have all in common one employment, which no prospect of worldly advantage should tempt us to forego. We should never hesitate, for a moment, when the paramount interests of our eternal salvation enter into competition with the most pressing opportunities of promoting our temporal good. In the succinct and energetic language of the Apostle, we should ever "use the things of this world so as not to abuse them."

Having observed thus much on the nature of industry itself, I proceed to consider the benefits and blessings it confers both on individuals themselves, and on society at large. Happiness, in this life, consists rather in freedom from inconvenience and pain, than in the positive enjoyment of pleasure. In this point of view, industry must be confessed to be eminently conducive to happiness; since
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it delivers us from that lassitude which makes us incapable of relishing any kind of delight; since it delivers us from the tyranny of those anxieties and passions to which the mind, when earnestly employed, has no leisure to attend; and lastly, since it delivers us from that state of miserable dependance on the exertion of others, which, when occasioned by our own indolence, is a most galling yoke to any generous and manly spirit. But besides the exemption which it grants from those evils, industry is the parent of many real advantages. Every power and faculty of man is invigorated and perfected by use. Habituated to labour and exercise, the sinews of the body become firmer and more alert. Inured to reflexion and study, the understanding is expanded and enlivened by practice, the memory becomes more retentive, and the imagination more vigorous.

So requisite does some employment seem for the well-being of man, that even, in his original state of bliss, he was not to be an useless burden to the earth, or an idle spectator of the works of God.

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For we are told, that the "Lord God took man to put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." That task, indeed, was much less irksome than the work afterwards imposed on him. He had to repress an exuberant paradise, overgrown with fruitfulness and wild with sweets; not to solicit a barren soil, which brought forth nothing of itself, except thorns and thistles.

It is reasonable to imagine some analogy as to his mental endowments. The exercise of his mind would probably consist rather in the selection than in the accumulation of ideas; rather in directing their vigour than in supplying their deficiency. However this might be, his nature does not seem to have placed him above the necessity of some species of labour.

Nor does industry contribute only to our own enjoyments, but it promotes also the enjoyments of those who are most dear to us. Its happy effects are reflected back to us from the comfort

comfort and satisfaction it imparts to our families, our friends, and our dependents. Are we concerned that our children should be rescued from the temptations to which penury will expose them? Or, if fortune has made sufficient provision for them are we anxious that they should have a good example to follow, and the reputation of a worthy parentage to recommend them at their entrance into the world? Have any, among us, an aged and helpless parent, to whom we have an opportunity of repaying the care and trouble we occasioned him in our earlier years? Are there any who depend upon us, in any way, for protection, for assistance, for support? It is only by the habitual exercise of our faculties, whether mental or bodily, as every particular case may require, that we can expect to fulfil these various duties with most judgment, efficacy, and success. The rewards of wealth, distinction, and reputation, those acquirements which we commonly think so desirable in themselves, and which may certainly be employed to most excellent purposes, are all annexed to the exertions of judicious

cious and patient perseverance. To enlarge on that diligence which has for its object the investigation of divine truths, or the practice of moral discipline, does not enter into my present plan, which is confined to the consideration of the duty in its humbler province of presiding over our temporal affairs. Otherwise a spacious field would be opened to us; and our happiness in another world might be shewn to be closely connected with diligence, as engaged in the cause of religion and virtue.

When considered as to its effects on the community at large, the influence of industry is still more manifestly and decidedly important. For there are two points of view into which the well-being of man, taken individually, is necessarily divided; one in his present condition, the other in a future state of existence; and the former must always give place to the latter. But when we contemplate the human race, as collected into bodies, and moulded into the several forms of society, that separation of interests no longer holds. As the various

various modes of government are framed only for the accommodation of men in this life, in appreciating their excellencies or defects, we must have regard only to the degree in which they are calculated to answer that end. A spirit of industry is chiefly what conduces to render a state happy, respectable, and great. The acquisition of property by violence, and the extension of dominions by conquest, are generally followed by depravity of manners, and often by a sudden reverse of fortune; and what has been thus unjustly obtained, proves a most dangerous possession to the owners. The torpor of indolence and the supineness of want are equally destructive of national prosperity. Every thing useful or noble languishes in such a state of society, and its members fall an easy and wretched prey to the attacks of rapacity and ambition. But when industry prevails, then tranquillity and opulence are most likely to be found within, and from without, awe, confidence, and friendship. Then the most equal laws will be established, the most refined civilization of manners introduced, and the greatest

greatest works of public utility and magnificence established.

Thus necessary does the practice of this duty appear to the welfare of men, either individually or collectively considered. In this instance, let us not fail to adore the merciful dispensations of the all-wise Being, who has thus wonderfully produced good from evil, and converted the punishment of offending man into the means of his blessing. Whatever be our lot in this life, however mean or irksome, let us remember that it is the lot which he hath assigned us, and that if we perform our task with alacrity and diligence we shall not be disappointed of our reward. For the lowest exertions of industry, if placed in this light, will acquire considerable importance. If we are called to act a higher part, let no fond trust in fortune, no vain imagination of superior talents, induce us to slacken our endeavours, as we must give an account of those talents, whatever their success may be.

To

To conclude—Let us keep in mind, that the patient continuance in well-doing is the first part of industry to be observed by every Christian, and that to maintain the Christian character should be our first aim, as it is our most indispensable concern.

SERMON



SERMON V.

EZEKIEL, 18 *Cb.* 30 *Verse.*

REPENT, AND TURN YOURSELVES FROM ALL YOUR
TRANSGRESSIONS: SO INIQUITY SHALL NOT
BE YOUR RUIN.

IT is a truth which cannot, with propriety, be disputed, that there is in human nature an instinctive sense of right and wrong, by the influence of which men become conscious of deserving punishment when they have disobeyed its dictates. This consciousness is accompanied by a tacit acknowledgment both of the existence and moral government of a superior Being, to whom they acknowledge that vengeance belongeth. Hence arose the opinion, which, from its prevalence, we may also consider as implanted in the mind, that this great Being was placable when offended, and willing to accept not only personal, but vicarious sufferings.

as expiatory of sin. These truths, though they might, without much difficulty, be discovered by considering the nature of man, are, however, placed beyond the possibility of doubt or denial by the evidence of facts as authentic as they are numerous, and as striking as they are important. For into what history of uncivilized man, ancient or modern, can we look and not find ceremonies of expiatory sacrifices, barbarous and absurd it must be acknowledged, but indicative of a consciousness of guilt, and a persuasion of the placability of the Deity. And it is not only among uncivilized nations that we find these sentiments; for we see them adopted as the ground-work of their religious systems by the inhabitants of more civilized and polished countries.

It was natural to expect that a stronger confirmation would be given of this consolatory and animating belief than was deducible from its universality. And, blessed be God, we find this expectation fully answered in the two covenants which he was pleased to make with his fallen creatures.

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For though under the law (in which revelation of his will, however confined to one people, he plainly intimated his design of eventually proposing terms of reconciliation as comprehensive as they would be gracious) he accepted sacrifices and expiation for small sins only, and principally offered temporal promises; yet, in process of time, as the grand scheme of man's redemption was unfolded, his benevolent designs were fulfilled by establishing repentance and amendment of life, through faith in Jesus Christ, as the principal means of man's salvation. That this was the ultimate object of God's various revelations, we might perhaps safely conclude from his frequent and solemn exhortations to the rebellious Jews (which we have reason to think he intended should be applied by all descriptions of people in the successive ages of the world to themselves): but it becomes indisputable, if we consider the preparatory discourses of the Baptist, the repeated and unequivocal declarations of our Lord himself, and the exhortations of his disciples and apostles. Thus then, in this fuller dispensation of his will, we see the Almighty confirming, in the

most irrefragable manner, the suggestions of unenlightened nature, that there was mercy with him, and extending the terms of reconciliation to the whole world, to which it holds out the most powerful inducements to forsake sin, the most animating encouragements to persevere in righteousness, and the most glorious rewards to crown even imperfect obedience. Now it may reasonably be supposed that the manifestation of such amazing goodness, the offer of such inestimable benefits, would at least be reverently, if not gratefully received.

But we shall be more deeply sensible of the inestimable value of this dispensation, if we state, a little more at large, the principal advantages which we receive from it. It is from this dispensation then that we acquire the most accurate and just information on the most important of all subjects, the placability of God. Hence we derive the solution of those perplexing doubts which arise in the minds of all thinking and feeling men unenlightened by the gospel, and which agitate them with the most painful emotions of alarm and inquietude on
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the commission of sin, or the omission of acknowledged duties. Resting, with undoubting confidence, on the truths which have been disclosed to us in the revelation of his nature, will, and designs, which God has, with astonishing condescension, communicated to us by the gospel of his son Jesus Christ, we look upon the ridiculous and abominable rites of expiation and atonement which have prevailed, and yet prevail in the greater part of the habitable globe, with alternate pity and contempt, indignation and abhorrence, and in the ardour of our gratitude we bless him for the illumination and comfort which that gospel affords us. For besides the inestimable advantage which we derive from it in that upon subjects the most curious and important that can occupy the attention of the human mind, it enlightens our ignorance, corrects our mistakes, dispels our fears, and confirms our warmest and sublimest hopes; we are indebted to it (for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful) for the great doctrine of *repentance*. By this we are assured, that though God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without indignation, yet that through the

sacrifice of his son, our Saviour Jesus Christ (the means appointed by himself) he will not only pardon unavoidable infirmities and omissions, but even the most profligate and abandoned wickedness, though begun in contempt of his authority, and continued in defiance of his power; provided it be succeeded by a timely, hearty, persevering, and effectual repentance.

The manner too in which this duty is proposed to us claims our admiration and regard. It is comprehended in various and detached parts, yet forming a consistent whole, in which the most solemn and pathetic exhortations are addressed to those who are "dead in trespasses and sins," the most severe, but wholesome reproofs to the pusillanimous, the most animating assurances and the sweetest consolations to the desponding, and the most awful and terrible denunciations to those who shall persevere in hating the light, and in rejecting the proffered means and terms of salvation. Thus are the ways pointed out to us, and the means prescribed by which we may be led from error to truth,

truth, from vice to virtue, from weakness to strength, from death to life, "from dishonour to glory."

And now let me ask in what manner this doctrine, so admirably adapted to our wants and weaknesses, and so consonant to our wishes and expectations, is received? Is it with an holy eagerness and with ardent gratitude? Is it not rather with contemptuous disregard and sullen indifference? Would to God, that the experience both of past and the present times, even those in which Christianity has been thought to have been most universally and firmly established, did not extort the acknowledgment, that though generally allowed to be the means appointed by Divine wisdom and goodness for the restoration and salvation of man, it has been, and is, perhaps, more so now than at any former period, most unaccountably despised and disregarded, or at least imperfectly performed.

That these assertions are not advanced without sufficient reason, will be most satisfactorily proved

by a reference to the conduct of those to whom this duty is at any time or in any manner proposed. Are the gay men of the world by any chance excited to the performance of it, while full of youth and health, and possessed of the means of continuing their sensual pursuits? What is their language? To others, they say, let us leave this duty—a duty so mortifying and so humiliating, and it may be, so unavailing—to others, who have neither taste nor capacity for the pleasures of life, whose days, in all probability, are but few on earth, and in whom it may perhaps be prudent to lay hold on this doctrine, as their only hope and support—to such let us leave the task of practising absurd mortifications and pouring out idle complaints: but for us who have both the spirit and the power to enjoy life, who have many years to come, “let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures like as in youth: let us fill ourselves with costly wine and ointments, and let no flower of the spring pass by us: let us crown ourselves with rose-buds before they are withered: let none of us go without his part of voluptuousness: let us leave
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tokens of our joyfulness in every place; for this is our portion, and our lot is this;" at all events, it is an easy duty, to which we may at any time have recourse, for the gates of mercy are at all times open, and sinners are continually invited to enter in at them.—Are there not others, who, with less effrontery and daring boldness, are equally negligent of present opportunities, and who, with an unaccountable stupidity, delay their repentance, though deeply impressed with the conviction, that it is their interest, as well as their duty, to begin it with alacrity, and proceed in it with vigour and perseverance? In the exertions (if such they can be called) of those too, who seriously, and with the best intentions, apply themselves to this long-neglected duty, what do we see but a sorrow, consisting of a few sighs and tears, the natural result, perhaps, of bodily weakness, or extorted by the apprehension of some imminent danger, a few passionate resolutions, which disappear as the "morning cloud, or the early dew which passeth away;" or at best, a suspension of their wickedness rather than the practice of virtue.

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And as to those who have begun it with greater earnestness and sincerity, and have proceeded in it with tolerable steadiness and consistency, how imperfect do we find their efforts? For do we not see them ostentatiously renouncing some sins to which they feel but slightly attached, and retaining others (perhaps more shameful, enormous and destructive) to which, by long habit, they are unalterably devoted? Do we not see them abusing themselves, and deceiving others, by pretending to forgive their enemies, yet retaining resentment, and secretly contriving the means of gratifying it; and lastly, do we not see them either altogether withholding, or partially restoring the gains of extortion, and refusing to make not merely adequate, but the slightest compensation for the injuries they have committed? Since, then, such fallacious and dangerous opinions are entertained of this great duty, and since they are become so general and prevalent in the minds of men, it becomes highly necessary that its real nature should be stated, and the criminality, the absurdity, and ruinous consequences of them pointed out; and this

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I shall now endeavour to do, in as concise and comprehensive a manner, as the nature of the subject will admit,

Now repentance is a duty of very considerable extent. It comprizes other numerous and important duties. Considered in its most comprehensive sense; it not only signifies a rooted conviction of the folly and criminality of sin, sincere confessions of unworthiness, and earnest deprecations of the divine wrath, unfeigned sorrow and firm resolution of amendment of life, but a strong detestation of wickedness, and an ardent love of virtue; it signifies not only the renunciation, but the extirpation of evil habits, and the acquisition and practice of much positive goodness, in proportion to the ability, time and opportunities afforded us. For to constitute a real and efficacious repentance, there must be a renunciation not of this or that particular vice, which, from incapacity, perhaps, we can never indulge again, or are for the present disgusted with; there must be no commutation of crimes; no insidious reservation of favourite sins; but

but an absolute and unconditional surrender of all criminal attachments, of all wicked principles, and as far as is possible, of all vicious propensities. In addition to this, as a willing and complete restitution and compensation must be made to those whom we have in any way injured, so also must there be a cordial and unreserved forgiveness of those injuries we may ourselves have sustained. To confirm this statement of what I conceive real repentance to be, by a reference to scripture, every repentant sinner must not only "put off the old man with his affections and lusts, but he must put on the new man in righteousness and holiness of life, and besides this, giving all diligence, he must add to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." Such is the end at which every man must aim, who repents of his wickedness, and wishes to return from evil to good. Nor must it be dissembled, however discouraging it may appear, that this duty is arduous as well as extensive.

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It requires a courageous constancy, an inflexible resolution, and a patient perseverance, by the exercise of which the most alluring temptations, and the most stubborn difficulties may be repelled and overcome. For what shall prevent a repentant sinner, when he reflects on the remaining strength of his bad habits, his inaptitude to good, his propensity to evil, his frequent relapses, and his imperfect obedience; what, I say, but the exercise of these qualities, shall prevent him from desperately surrendering himself to all his former evil ways, and plunging into still lower depths of wickedness, misery and destruction?

Since, then, such is the extent, and such the various and difficult duties which real repentance involves, in what terms sufficiently forcible can we express our indignant feelings, when we reflect on the arrogant pretensions, and idle expectations, of those giddy voluptuaries whom I particularized in a former part of this discourse? Were we to give utterance to our thoughts, we should thus address them,—Blind and presumptuous men “ye know

know not of what spirit ye are," when ye thus scornfully treat this essential doctrine of Christianity, and "we pray God the thoughts of your hearts may be forgiven." The doctrine you thus shamelessly reprobate, as mortifying and humiliating to men, is so only at the first entrance into the paths which it prescribes, for to those who undauntedly proceed in them, there soon arises, to revive their drooping spirits, and assuage their deepest sorrows, an inexhaustible spring of comfort and refreshment; at every step they proceed, they find hope succeeding to despair, and serenity to confusion of mind; confidence, joy and tranquillity, taking the place of distrust, misery, and perturbation; and the Almighty appearing, instead of an object of terror and hatred, in the amiable light of their guide and support, their protector and consoler;—and as to the humiliation which it produces, proud indeed must that spirit be, which shall disdain to acknowledge the weakness, the baseness, and the corruption of human nature, and to humble itself under the mighty hand of an avenging God. Its efficacy which you thus tauntingly arraign, is established

blished on foundations (if men will perform their part) as immoveable as the nature of God himself, inasmuch as they were established by him from the beginning of the world.—But you say you have many years to come, and the gates of mercy always stand open.—This is an imagination so vain, a confidence so hardy, as equally excite our pity and astonishment. In opposition to it, behold the history of man, and the word of God. On the uncertainty of life, it would be idle to insist; it is too evident to admit of demonstration, too alarming to need a comment. The gates of mercy always open! But what mean these awful, these decisive declarations of the Saviour of the world,—“Ye shall seek me but shall not find me;”—“I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins.”—“When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, he (Jesus Christ) shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence you are—depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.”—What means the parable

parable of the ten virgins, five of whom being foolish, were not provided for the coming of the bridegroom, and were shut out from the marriage?—But the duty is at all times easy. Easy, to whom? To the proud contemner and reviler of religion, to the adulterer, the gamester, the fornicator, the drunkard, the oppressor? Are faith and humility, chastity and sobriety, contentedness and justice, these noble and ennobling virtues, are these so easily acquired, that a man has but to wish for them to attain them? How striking is the impiety and absurdity of your pretensions and expectations, by indulging which, be assured you will “sow to the wind, and reap destruction.”

But the number of such desperate characters is small in comparison of those, who deeply impressed not only with the truths of religion in general, but also with the necessity and efficacy of repentance, betray, however, a lamentable aversion to begin what they so reasonably resolve on. This is a delusion, from which scarcely any mind is completely free. This propensity to procrastinate

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is observable in all, in whom any sense of virtue remains. It is the openly abandoned only, whose time of probation we may suppose to be past, who proceed without interruption in their career of wickedness. Innumerable are the calls to repentance, which all who are less profligate and less hardened, cannot but hear and understand, and which all too, with nearly equal insaturation, disregard or resist. How few are there who do not acknowledge the excellency of the precepts and commandments of Christianity, and yet scruple not deliberately to violate or neglect them! How many are there who proceed in a course of wickedness, for which they ingenuously and severely condemn themselves, and in which, though they almost daily resolve to forsake it, they unexpectedly find themselves almost compelled to continue! Such, unhappily for man, is the power of habit; such, the weakness of the best-founded and most deliberate resolutions. It is to be observed also, that though they find themselves thus early deceived, and their intentions thus perpetually frustrated, they still feel disposed to form new
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designs of amendment, and are still confident that they shall be able to put them into execution. Now it is evident that they do not so frequently fall from their purposes by surprize, as by actual deliberation. They think that at some distant period, the undertaking of reforming their lives will be easier, much assistance which cannot now be had, may then be obtained, and some present obstacles will then be removed. The time arrives, and they find themselves embarrassed with more difficulties, they wish and resolve again, and again they find themselves unwilling, and many of them unable, as they suppose, to begin. The consequences of this infatuation are dreadful.—The religious and moral condition of man is never stationary.—He must either proceed or retreat. Thus, then, by this delay, the evil habits which a man intends, sometime or other, to correct or subdue, and the bad principles he intends, sometime or other, to rectify or renounce, acquire strength and stability by indulgence, and soon take such wide and deep root as to defy the most strenuous exertions to eradicate them. His sentiments of right and wrong become confused ;

confused; the love of virtue, which he once possessed, becomes weaker and weaker; and that ardor, which formerly animated his designs of reformation, is transferred to the cause of vice; his reason takes the side of his passions which he finds it so difficult to regulate; and at length, the whole man is so completely subdued, that he loses the wish and the hope, and almost the power of reformation. The lamentable degeneracy which succeeds, places him in that last stage of human corruption, in which he seems deserted by that holy spirit which formerly suggested his good resolutions, and would have assisted his exertions; he is numbered with the hardened and impenitent "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." The apparent instances of such deplorable degeneracy, are, I fear, too numerous and too striking in the world, to escape the observation of the most careless, and too shocking to fail of exciting the compassion, and rousing the vigilance of the most insensible. Neither is this insatiation confined to those, who, from the strength of their constitution, and the firmness of their health, think that they

may, with little imprudence, delay this acknowledged duty. But, unhappily, it is chargeable on those whose constitution is ruined, and whose health is irreparably destroyed, before they have numbered half their days: it is chargeable on the old, who hover over the grave, whose lives, without a miracle to renovate the powers of nature, cannot much longer be continued, even such we see under the influence of this deluding confidence, anxious, yet irresolute, now boldly resolving, and now fearfully shrinking from the contest; their passions one while impelling them to their accustomed gratifications, their reason restraining them. And now we may ask, whether any cowardice can be so despicable as this; any slavery so vile and debasing; any ingratitude so heinous; any peril so tremendous. Such, then, is the criminality, the absurdity, and the danger of delaying repentance.

But must all attempts to rescue ourselves from the dominion of evil habits, be unavailing? Will no exertion be sufficient? Let it not be imagined, my

my brethren, for a moment, that we cannot employ, with sufficient energy and effect, those means of delivering ourselves from the power and consequences of our sins with which we are furnished. Of the greater part of awakened and returning sinners, it may be affirmed, that their designs of amendment have been frustrated, not so much by the real difficulty of the undertaking, as from the weakness and irregularity of their exertions. Hence are their frequent failures, hence their disgraceful relapses, and hence, too, their confirmed and inveterate wickedness.

Now, as a proof that an uniform and thorough repentance is not impossible to those who have time and health and opportunities sufficient, let it be supposed that riches, honours, and power, those idols of our adoration, to which every eye and heart are incessantly turned; let it be supposed, I say, that these were to be the rewards of a systematic, radical, and permanent change of life, what do we think would be the consequence? No pains would be spared, no deluding confidences indulged, no

imaginary impediments alledged. All the powers of the mind would be so effectually exerted, that all those turbulent passions which before ruled them with an uncontrollable and afflicting sway, would be allayed, if not extinguished, and all the false principles and opinions which were before their pride and their boast, would be discarded as unworthy their understanding and destructive to their happiness: new principles, new opinions, new habits, would succeed; in a word, all would be discipline and order, exertion and perseverance. Such would be the unremitting energy with which they would act, and such the effects; and all for the acquisition of what?—of riches, the possession of which, to speak of their least destructive effects, is sure to excite envy and to endanger virtue, by engendering pride and nourishing passion;—of honours, which have no substance or stability in themselves, but altogether depend upon the transitory opinion of others;—and of power, the exercise of which, guided by the purest intentions and the soundest discretion, is at all times invidious and dangerous. In this instance, we clearly see the obliquity of the will of
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man, the blindness of his understanding, and the corruption of his heart, in their most hideous features, and most disgusting deformity.

To conclude, as the doctrine of repentance is unquestionably of divine origin, and of the highest importance to us, let us not prize it the less because it is sometimes misrepresented by the ignorance of misguided enthusiasts, or scoffingly vilified by a few shallow philosophers, or perversely undervalued by the indolent and supine; but let every sinner, of every description, receive it with the profoundest humility and the liveliest gratitude, and following without hesitation, the dictates of reason, and the commands of revelation, let him proceed to discharge the various duties it enjoins with an undeviating steadiness and insurmountable resolution, undismayed by difficulties, and unseduced by temptations. Thus, alone, will he be able to break the chains by which he is held in an ignominious and dangerous subjection, and to "enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God."

mean, the blindness of his understanding, and the corruption of his heart, by their most hideous colours, and most disgusting testimony.

To conclude, as the doctrine of repentance is undeniably of divine origin, and of the highest importance to us, let it not pass in the least case as a sentimentality, or a theory, or a fancy, or a mere philosophical or poetical ornament, or a mere intellectual and humanist, and let it be the subject of every description, receive it with the profoundest humility, and the least hesitation, and follow it about, as the only way to the kingdom of heaven, and the only way to the forgiveness of sins, and the only way to the life of the soul, and the only way to the glory of God.

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SERMON VI.

PETER, 1 *Ep.* 1 *Ch.* 15 *Verse.*

BUT AS HE WHICH HAS CALLED YOU IS HOLY, SO
BE YE HOLY IN ALL MANNER OF CONVERSA-
TION.

THE perfection of the Almighty Being is so
transcendantly exalted, that our faculties are
almost overpowered by the mere contemplation of
its excellence. Not to speak of the attributes which
belong individually and incommunicably to God,
such as infinite wisdom and power, we can hardly
conceive it possible that our utmost endeavours
should reach to any resemblance of those which are
more imitable by man, his purity, his justice, and
his love. Far from feeling disposed to enter into a
competition with our Maker, the mind naturally
shrinks back into itself with the consciousness of
inferiority never to be removed, and is not without
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a painful sense of its own presumption, for having entertained even the most distant idea of the comparison.

In the character of our blessed Lord during his mission upon earth, we discover a gracious design to remove this obstacle. Here the insufferable blaze of the Divine Majesty is tempered and softened under the veil of human infirmities and sufferings. We approach, not without awe indeed, yet with something of confidence and ease to the sacred model, and can trace out some lineaments which appear so familiar and engaging, that we do not utterly despair of our ability to copy them. We have the exhortations and advice of the holy Apostles themselves to countenance and support us in the attempt. We have the whole character of our Saviour portrayed in their writings with a full and masterly hand, as well as many particular passages of it most happily enlarged and commented upon. We have no weak and unanimated transcript of it in the lives of the Apostles and Martyrs themselves. And what is more than all, we have the offer of
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God's holy spirit to assist and enlighten us, if we seriously engage in the great work.

After the enumeration of all these encouragements and aids, may it not reasonably be enquired, with some surprize, whence it comes to pass that there are so few Christians who rightly avail themselves of the means thus put into their hands, and so many who do not even think of proposing to themselves the character of our Saviour, as the object of their imitation? This general delinquency it would be uncharitable to impute to wilful neglect, to "hardness of heart and contempt of God's word and commandment." Let us rather ascribe it to a perversion of judgment, and a defect in the application of general rules to particular instances, or to want of an adequate conception of the importance of the duty itself. In order to obviate both these errors, I shall endeavour, in the first place, to shew in what manner, and under what limitations, the injunction to imitate the example of our Saviour may be understood; and in the next place, how absolutely incumbent it is on all Christians

tians to observe it. Before we attempt to put any maxim into practice, it is requisite that we should be thoroughly acquainted with its real meaning. There are many good rules which, for want of a proper application, have been productive only of mistake and confusion. Even the excellent one now under our consideration, has not been exempted from this fate. By some it has been strangely used as a plea for a dereliction of the ordinary duties of life, and an excuse for idleness and abstraction. By others it has still more perversely been construed into an authority for despising the forms and destroying the distinctions of society. It would lead into a long and not very agreeable discussion, to enquire into all the extravagancies and follies, the vices and enormities, with which human imagination and human depravity have contrived to mar and disfigure this beautiful and simple ground-work. It is a common artifice of hypocrisy and villany to colour over and recommend the worst motives and designs with the fairest pretences; nor is imposture ever more dangerous than when it puts on the garb of sanctity and truth. If then the example of the purest

purest Being that ever conversed among men, is capable of being so strained as to be made an apology for the conduct and principles of the worst, how much reason have we to apprehend that it may be undesignedly misinterpreted, owing to that partiality or misconception from which few are entirely free.

The great clue to successful imitation of any kind, is, that we should endeavour to imbibe the spirit of the original, and not busy ourselves in an exact and scrupulous copy of particulars, which will not fail to lead us into the greatest absurdities. For instance, take the character of any man most eminent and approved in any way or profession of life: if you attempt to tread precisely in his steps, and adopt indiscriminately his train of acting, not allowing for the difference of circumstances, and the alteration which the flux of time is continually working in the face of human affairs, you will, in the result, infallibly expose yourself to ridicule and disappointment. But strive to enter into the views and disposition of that man; observe his behaviour in the most important and trying occurrences, and
judge

judge how he would have acted had he been in your situation, and then, perhaps, you may justly promise yourself some profit from his example. It is in this way we are enjoined to conform ourselves to the likeness of our Lord, or to speak in the language of St. Paul, "to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, that we may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." To glorify his Father in heaven, and to promote the happiness of men, were the great and sole objects of our Saviour's life, and holiness and purity were the means which he employed to attain those objects. So far it is in the power of all to imitate. But to go further, and draw out those actions which were occasioned by the peculiar part he filled in the world, as the Mediator between God and man, into rules for our own behaviour, would be foolish and idle presumption. Do we find him, when a child, tarrying behind his parents at Jerusalem without their knowledge, and discussing questions with the Jewish Doctors in the Temple? Shall this be construed into a plea for the want of filial obedience in those who in their earlier years imagine themselves

selves to be wiser and better than their parents? Do we meet him afterwards in the houses of somewhat more than ordinary festivity, in the company of publicans and sinners? Shall we regard this as a sanction to ourselves for resorting to such society? Do we see him at last exposing himself to an ignominious and cruel death? Shall we suppose this to be a sufficient warrant for our neglect of the great law of self-preservation? Many parts of his conduct utterly defy all attempts at imitation. His fasting forty days in the wilderness, his healing the diseases and infirmities of man by a word, and his recalling the dead to life—these miracles, it evidently could enter none but the chimerical imagination of a madman to suppose himself capable of performing. I mention such instances only to demonstrate how far the precept of following the example of our Lord is from being unconditional: we ought, as I have already intimated, to understand it as a direction to frame our temper of minds in consonance with his. This must be done by rooting out our evil passions and inclinations, by restraining, within due bounds, our inordinate affections for any species of worldly enjoyment, however innocent in itself,

itself, and by encouraging the growth of all religious and moral perfection. There is no condition in which we may not successfully cultivate the virtues of forbearance, meekness, charity. There is no avocation that precludes us from guarding our purity of heart and mind. On every temptation and trial that springs up around us, we may take occasion to engraft some kind of piety and goodness proceeding from the parent stock of Christ's example. Through all the several relations of life, this enlivening principle, if duly directed, will branch out and produce its proper fruits. In short, that combination of the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove, which was exhibited in the character of our blessed Lord, must be completely competent to the best performance of the most arduous duty, since it was proved in his case to be sufficient for accomplishing a far more weighty and difficult office than can ever again be devolved on man.

It has been objected by some who have taken a prejudiced and partial view of Christianity, that it affords no encouragement for the practice

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So that the more secure and prosperous wicked men may appear, the more reason have they to fear him, who is a God of vengeance, as well as of mercy and of just retribution, both to them who do well and suffer for it, and them who do ill and suffer not.

Now the least reflexion on such incontrollable power, such all-searching wisdom, such ineffable purity and holiness, and such impartial and inflexible justice, will naturally beget, in every virtuous and well-ordered mind, the deepest awe and profoundest veneration, which, as they best become weak, dependent, and sinful creatures, are also best calculated to assist us in this our probationary state. But though this may be the useful effect which such consideration may produce, on virtuous and well-ordered minds, yet in minds naturally weak, and rendered still weaker by long habits of debauchery, or in those of a stronger make, which have been softened by calamity, or disordered by guilt, the consideration of these more severe and awful attributes, to the exclusion of the benignity, the beneficence,

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ficence, and the mercy of God, will be sure to occasion the most distracting apprehensions, destructive of all counsel and design, and pregnant with the most intolerable misery,—apprehensions which have a direct tendency to alienate the mind from God, and give it a disgust and disrelish for all the exercises of religion.

A more miserable condition cannot be imagined than that of the man who fears God as a Being cruel and implacable, vindictive and unrelenting; as a Being too pure to be pleased with less than perfection, and too just and powerful not to punish the sins which he must hate and has forbidden by the severest threats and most dreadful denunciations. Under the impression of such vain terrors, such corroding anxiety, he becomes a burden to himself and all who are connected with him. In vain is he surrounded with the various blessings of art and nature—in vain does he live under an equal and beneficent government, or in a fruitful and delightful climate—in vain are the affectionate obedience of his wife, the dutiful submission of his children, the

the well-meant kindnesses of friends, and all the courtesies and endearments of private life—to his disordered mind and jaundiced eye, the most luxuriant and magnificent scenes of nature, teeming with fruitfulness or resplendent with glory, in vain present themselves—they are regarded with frigid indifference, or hated as likely to inspire him with a cheerfulness he thinks would be criminal—but though from such scenes he turns with aversion, yet by the horrors of the tempest, or the barrenness of desolation, he is, for a time, gratified, as harmonizing with the heaviness of his spirit, and as exhibiting the nature and the power of that God, whom alone, in his perverted imagination, he acknowledges and adores. The ill effects of this dejecting and degrading superstition stop not here. It produces consequences more extensive, and not merely destructive of the peace of mind of individuals, but prejudicial to the cause of religion itself. For is it to be wondered at, if those who entertain such servile affections, and who find, in the exercises of religion, neither comfort nor hope, neither remission of present pain, nor expectation of future assistance,

assistance, should at length, finding the burden too heavy to bear, throw off at once, by one desperate effort, both the fear and the acknowledgment of a God, who appears to exist only to confound them with amazement, and overwhelm them with despair. To such extremity of impiety and folly some men have really been driven by superstition. But though the instances of such desperation are rare, it is by no means an uncommon case for those whose minds are thus depressed by fear, to *bate*, while they worship God with such scrupulous anxiety—to doubt and distrust his milder attributes, and even secretly to wish, either that there was no God at all, or that they could free themselves from so intolerable a subjection. Thus injurious to religion is this species of superstition, by exhibiting the Deity in so forbidding a light. Thus too are the enemies of religion furnished with additional arguments against it; for may they not with too much reason, deriving their sentiments from such false representations as are made of it by some modern sectarists, who arrogate to themselves a superior and almost exclusive knowledge of its true doctrines, may

may not its enemies, I say, with a contemptuous and bitter irony, thus exclaim, "Come all ye, who are heavy laden with sin and sorrow, to this religion; behold here a shelter from the storm of adversity, or the anguish of a wounded conscience: under the healing influence of this most comfortable religion, your griefs will be assuaged, your apprehensions dispelled, your forfeited hopes renewed: all within this hallowed sanctuary will be peace and serenity, joy and exultation: here, and here only, the God of consolation dwells, who cheers the afflicted, and animates the desponding; who rewards obedience to his will, even in this world, with present enjoyments and anticipations of happiness in the world to come."

But though there may be some ground for such taunting and bitter reflexions, yet let those who would thus inveigh against the use of religion from its abuse, enjoy a triumph as unenvied as it is illiberal. Such disorders of the spirit as the excess of religious fear produces in some men, seem to us rather the object of pity than derision, and it is our duty to

avoid their mistakes, and, in the spirit of true Christian charity, to endeavour to direct them into the right way, from which, perhaps with the best intentions, they have unfortunately deviated.

But deplorable as it is to find so much misery resulting to individuals in general, and so much injury to religion in particular, from the misdirection and excess of this passion; yet in these extraordinary times, we are presented with the still more melancholy spectacle of increasing numbers of bold and profligate men, some of them too of the most exalted intellect, who, though they cannot but admit that the judgments of the Lord are abroad, and to a certain degree, acknowledge, amidst the striking displays of an enraged Omnipotence, which seem to be multiplying around us, both the existence and the exercise of his most formidable attributes, yet remain unconcerned for themselves, and unmoved for others. And so far are they from being ashamed of this fearless temper of mind, this unnatural insensibility, they even seem ambitious of shewing to what heights of presumption it is within

within the capacity of human nature to ascend. For have we not too many among us, who having burst through the strongest barriers of nature and education, have been hardy enough to glory in their cool contempt and invenomed reprobation of all those mild and silent virtues, those warm, generous, and disinterested feelings, which, when permitted to exert the influence which belongs to them, restrain and mitigate the natural fierceness of the human character, soften its asperities, harmonize its jarring propensities, and are the fruitful sources, as they are the faithful guardians, of individual and general peace and order? The real language of such men, if given in plain and unequivocal terms, and stripped of the aids of high-sounding words and sophistical jargon, is this, that meekness, humility, and gratitude (in themselves the noblest virtues, and the foundation of almost all moral worth) are inconvenient restraints upon the liberty of man, fettering his independence, and checking the strongest energies of his mind—that by too great a distrust of our own powers, and too great a deference to others, an abject surrender is

often made of some of the best rights of man—that ignorance and pride, particularly if supported by wealth and power, are thus extended and augmented, the current of knowledge clogged, the human intellect depressed, degraded, and almost overpowered; in a word, the dominion of civil and religious tyranny has thus been too long exercised, to the subversion of the happiness of man, and the degradation of his nature.

But wicked and desperate as these designs are, they stop not here. With an unparalleled presumption, they introduce this very train and spirit of thinking into the awful subject of religion. For their designs would be but partially accomplished, if they rested at establishing an haughty, unfeeling, and selfish independence between man and man. But they aim at separating us even from God himself. For with the benevolent design, forsooth, of rescuing us from the tyranny of superstition, they would persuade us (if we may judge from their conduct, which speaks plainer than their words) either openly to defy and set at nought the All-powerful

powerful Author of all existence, the gracious benefactor of the universe, or, which is almost as weak and as wicked, to discard from our minds all gratitude for his blessings, all dread of his majesty, veneration for his goodness, submission to his will, and dependance upon his mercy; but more particularly would they persuade us to give up, as idle reveries, all reliance on the merits of our Redeemer, and all expectation of the assistance of the holy spirit.

Now whether there will be any real courage, any true wisdom, or even common prudence in following such desperate and impious suggestions, or whether such a temper of mind, as is here recommended, becomes so weak and corrupt a being as man, either in respect to his fellow creatures or God, let any one judge who has the least regard for the continuance of society, even in its most imperfect forms; any reverence for the dignity of human nature, or the preservation of natural as well as revealed religion; all of which will be brought into the most imminent hazard, when once men shall
universally

universally have lost all fear of God, of themselves, and of the world. For when this great work shall have been accomplished, what will inevitably be the consequences? A certain foul and unnatural hardihood of character will become predominant, a vulgar audacity of thinking, and fierceness of behaviour, will be the objects of general ambition, and soon destroy that un sullied purity, and that modest dignity of conduct, which have hitherto been so estimable in the world; man will not only be estranged from man, but every man's hand lifted against his brother, religion proscribed, and even morals shaken to the very centre; in a word, all the foundations of society will be undermined, and in the dissolution of those ties, moral, social and religious, which have hitherto connected us in a beneficial intercourse of good offices, and endearing communication, we shall have not only to lament the extent, but the continuance of the mischiefs with which the world will be deluged.

But. though such baneful effects result both from the misdirection and excessive indulgence of
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this passion of fear, as applied to God, and from its suppression or extinction, let us not hence weakly infer, that it cannot be so regulated as to be made a very powerful instrument of good. It was evidently implanted in us for the wisest and most benevolent purposes, and it requires but little penetration to discover its proper objects, and the limits within which it should be confined. God is certainly both its highest and properest object, and the boundary which it should not be suffered to pass (unless sinners are to be roused from a state of stupefaction, for then the apprehension of the terrors of the Lord can hardly be too strong) is an awe tempered with filial confidence, not disordering nor perplexing our imaginations, nor productive of frightful apprehensions; but of a composed spirit, which will equally prevent us from becoming indifferent or presumptuous, and imperceptibly leading us on from reverence, consideration, and discretion (its fair and genuine fruits) will most effectually preserve us from open impiety and secret scepticism, from the delusions and terrors of superstition, from the blasphemies of despair,

despair, and the haughtiness of self-sufficiency. For by considering God as a God of love as well as of power, merciful as well as just, ready to reward obedience as well as to punish disobedience, placable as well as severe, we shall from time to time be checked in our wanderings from virtue, and forwarded in the ways of righteousness. Though on the one hand persuaded, that God hateth sin, and will most assuredly punish it, if not repented of, yet we shall never presume, with an unauthorised confidence, on his compassion; and on the other hand, equally persuaded, that by many of his attributes and especial declarations in holy scripture, he stands engaged, as it were, not only to accept, through the merits of Jesus Christ, a timely, sincere, and thorough repentance, but also to assist our imperfect efforts by his special grace, we shall never feel disposed to become reprobate and abandoned, from a despair of his mercy. Thus, a due balance will always be kept up between our hopes and our fears, from whence will arise, in process of time, a steadiness and consistency of principle

principle and conduct, which no vicissitudes will be able to impair, no contingencies to disturb.

How amiable, how venerable, must the character of the man be, whose mind has been thus disciplined, and is thus guarded! How regular in the discharge of all his known duties, how peaceful the whole tenor of his life, how pleasant to himself, how useful to others! But the excellence of such a character will appear in the clearest point of view, when compared with that of the man whose whole life has been totally uninfluenced by this principle. Are they tried by prosperous events, surrounded with affluence, loaded with honours? While the impetuous and undisciplined spirit of the latter, restrained by no principle of honor or religion, nor softened by any comparison of the majesty of God with the weakness of man, and consequently as regardless of others as confident in himself, spurning the control of all laws, divine and human, as far as is consistent with his personal safety, hurries him, with an eagerness which no obstacles can retard, to the indulgence of every low and vicious desire, till he is lost in sensuality,

or

or (should his passions be stronger than his appetites) to the gratification of his ambition, his covetousness, his revenge, his envy, and every black and inordinate movement of his corrupted heart—the former, in the highest elevation of his fortune, surrounded by flatterers, courted by the mercenary, tempted by the most powerful allurements, preserves his integrity undiminished, his purity uncontaminated: he never, for a moment, forgets that his wealth, his power, and his honors have been conferred upon him by God; not as the rewards, but as the trials of his virtue; not that he may have a right or be enabled to gratify the lower propensities of his nature, but that the higher endowments and qualities of his mind may be exercised both for his own good and the good of all around him, that by his authority, lawfully acquired and duly exercised, bold and triumphant vice may be abashed and repelled, meek and retiring virtue drawn forth to public view, countenanced, encouraged, and rewarded.

Are they tried with adverse events, plunged into sickness, threatened with death? While the proud defier

fier of God, and contemner of his species, deprived of every support, destitute alike of consolation and of hope, is writhing under the agonies of an awakened conscience, and is venting his frantic imprecations, or lies stupified by disease and despair—the devout worshipper of God, and benefactor of his fellow creatures, alarmed by no guilty fears, stung by no remorse for the past, appalled by no apprehensions of the future, soon rises superior to his situation, and from evils his sufferings are converted into blessings, for believing on the best authority, either that they are sent to him as trials of his patience, or as correctives of his errors, he blesses the hand that strikes, kisses the rod that chastises, and with placid resignation or triumphant exultation, exclaims, “I thank thee gracious God for this visitation; I am persuaded it will become to me a source of good, a channel for thy favors, a warrant of thy mercy.”

In fine, what virtues, what graces may not be found in the character of the one, what vices, what deformities in that of the other! To sum them up in a few words, in the one we see either the un-
blushing

blushing contemner of religion, or the hypocritical observer of its outward forms—the insidious courtier, or, as serves his purpose, the factious demagogue—the perfidious friend—the unprincipled seducer—the ferocious husband—the unnatural parent; the object of general scorn and detestation—hated by man—and almost abandoned by God himself—in the other, we see with admiration and delight—the humble and sincere—the rational and fervent worshipper of God—the steady and conscientious patriot—the firm, indefatigable, and complacent friend—the tender husband—the indulgent father—the merciful master—revered and almost adored by his friends—admired even by his enemies—(for the best men have their enemies)—the ornament of his nature—beloved of his God—the accepted heir, through Jesus Christ, of eternal happiness.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

EXODUS, 20 *Cb. 8. Verse.*

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT
HOLY.

OF all the institutions which are now observed among mankind, there is not any one of nobler origin, or higher antiquity, than that of the sabbath. In the very first page of the holy writings, we meet with the grand and solemn occasion which gave rise to it. After the creation of the heavens and the earth; of the great light to rule the day, the brightness of which no eye can behold; of the lesser lights to rule the night, so wonderful for their number and motions, by which the seasons of the year are conducted; of this world which we inhabit, with all its various productions, herbs, trees, and animals; and, lastly, of man himself, in

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the exprefs image of his maker: after the finishing of this immense and magnificent work, in the space of fix days, we are told that the Almighty refted from his labour, and that therefore "he blessed the feventh day and fanctified it." But when, in procefs of time, wickednefs had fo far prevailed in the world, that true religion was almoft loft, then the celebration of the fabbath of the Lord was moft probably difcontinued, till it pleafed the Almighty to renew the commandment, and to fix the obfervation of it on the day when the deliverance of the Jews from the power of the Egyptians was accomplished, when Pharaoh and all his hofts perished in the Red Sea, and the Ifraelites were miraculoufly fed with manna in the wildernefs. And fince that period the fabbath has ever been regarded by all men who own the power of true religion, and worship God through his Son Jesus Chrift, with this difference only, that as the Jews ferved God as their creator and deliverer from the miferies of temporal bondage, we ferve him not only as our father and worldly protector, but alfo as our redeemer from the captivity of fin
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and death, and therefore observe the first day of the week instead of the seventh, because on that day our Saviour rose from the dead, and gave to us, thereby, an earnest of our redemption.

It might reasonably be supposed, that the mere consideration of these circumstances would be sufficient to raise in us a firm and hearty devotion in the observance of the sabbath. It must immediately strike us, if we are not totally blinded to all sense of right and wrong, that the merciful Being who framed us out of nothing into life, and at the same time gave us so many means of enjoying it, has a right to exact, not merely our homage in *one* day out of seven, but is entitled to our constant worship as long as we have any existence.—But however this necessity of paying this debt of gratitude may, for an instant, produce conviction in our hearts, yet the corrupt habits of the world too soon return and take their command over us, and we need some more powerful reasons to induce us to practise what, in our minds, we are sufficiently convinced it is our duty to perform.—It is intended, therefore, in this discourse, to state some of those

reasons, to point out the extreme danger of neglecting the duties, and profaning the holiness of the sabbath, as well as the good consequences that will result from observing it with due devotion and reverence; and afterwards to shew, in what manner we may observe it most acceptably to God, and most beneficially to ourselves.

In the first place, when we consider the extreme danger of profaning the sabbath, it must occur to us, that we are thereby slighting and despising the ordinances of the Almighty, and thereby drawing on ourselves his just and terrible indignation. Do we suppose the commandments were given to us as directions, which it was left to our own inclinations to follow or neglect, just as our fancy might lead us? That, though a transgression of human laws is attended with severe punishment, yet that the transgression of the laws of God is matter of mere indifference; and that we are to expect no kind of notice will be taken of it; that we are to suffer no afflictions in this world, nor misery in the next? If such are our suppositions, we are dreadfully

fully mistaken, and surely there are few so senseless as to imagine, that God can behold a wilful contempt of his commandments, without any tokens of his displeasure. But we need only look around us, to see that the neglect of the sabbath is attended with very serious consequences, and that even in this world, it frequently draws after it a heavy weight of punishment. From this source we shall find, that both the disorder and ruin of private families, and the vices and calamities which infest society, are very often derived. The bond by which all our virtues are held together, the respect of parents, affection towards children, obedience to the laws of our country, and the chief of all, our charity towards the whole race of mankind, must be the love of God, manifesting itself by the observance of *his* commandments; and unless so secured, these duties will run great danger of being frequently, if not totally neglected. But how are his commandments to be observed, how are they even to be known or learned by many of our fellow creatures, unless the stated times and days which he has ordained for the teaching of them,

be properly and devoutly attended to? Unless we sometimes meet together in his presence to hear his word, as delivered to us in the holy scriptures, to confess before him the weakness of our nature, and to renew our promises of future obedience, and our prayers for future assistance, and, above all, to commemorate at the holy table the death and sufferings of the Saviour of the world, and to know the benefits which are derived from thence upon all mankind. Those who obtain their livelihood by the sweat of their brows, whose days are passed in hard labour and humble industry, have few means, and little leisure, to obtain of themselves a knowledge of God's word. If, therefore, by their attendance on the sabbath day, they did not lay hold on almost the sole opportunity of obtaining such knowledge, they would not only be left in a dreadful state of ignorance with regard to their real duty, but be liable also to be misled by the bad principles of those, who might, for their own private ends, endeavour to deceive and corrupt them; as we all know that it is easier to mislead the ignorant than the instructed, and that not to have the
mind

mind strengthened by the precepts of virtue, is to leave it an open and defenceless prey to the artifices of vice. Those, to whose lot the good things of this world are fallen, whose riches enable them to live in ease and plenty, and on whom, probably, in their earlier days, great care has been employed to furnish them with excellent attainments, these men expose themselves to still greater danger from their neglect of the sabbath; they know their duty, and therefore cannot plead ignorance as an excuse for not performing it; they are more exposed, from their affluence and want of employment, to the allurements of pleasure, and therefore have the greater need of recurring frequently to divine assistance; they have the more important stewardship committed to their charge on earth; they will, therefore, have the larger and more momentous account to give in heaven, an account not confined to the manner in which their wealth has been employed (though that, no doubt, will be considered) but extended also to the degree of benefit they have conferred on their fellow creatures, by afford-

ing them an example of active and chearful obedience to the ordinances of their common father.

The neglect or profanation of the sabbath requires the greater caution and care in us to avoid it, because it is not one of those offences to which we have a natural and instinctive repugnance, and of which the effects are immediately perceived, either in our commerce with mankind, or by the inward feelings of our own consciences. He who utters a falsehood, or commits violence on the property or person of his neighbour, if he is detected, undergoes a certain punishment in the loss of his reputation, or from the correction of the laws; and if he is not detected, cannot possibly escape the more dreadful punishment of his own mind constantly accusing him of his guilt. But with regard to the breach of the sabbath, the case is different; it is not considered so highly criminal in the eyes of the world, or within our own bosoms; unless, indeed, we are seriously convinced of the services we owe to our Maker, and then it is not likely

likely that we shall break it at all. And yet the consequences of these crimes, of a violation of truth, or an injury to the person or property of our neighbour, are not more certainly felt in their general influence on the welfare of society, than the consequences of the transgression of this law of God. For what are the consequences of breaking the sabbath? and how are those employed, who, without any sufficient cause, absent themselves from divine service, and neglect the other duties of the day? Drunkenness, gaming, taking God's holy name in vain, loose conversation, and turbulent riotings and strife, are substituted in the place of devotion, sobriety, and pure and friendly discourse. And when one day out of seven, and that the most sacred of all, is so spent, I leave it to your own judgment to conjecture what thoughts, what actions, will follow during the remainder of the week.

In considering the good effects that will flow from a strict attention to this day, the mind is presented with objects of an aspect much more pleasant and satisfactory. The order and regularity of
society

society in general, the peace and happiness of private families, the decrease of public crimes, and the increase of public virtue, are the fair and excellent fruits which it produces. It will be difficult to find a people far advanced in iniquity, among whom the duties of this day are generally observed. It will be as difficult to discover a single family, which has always been regular in its attention to this day, that at the same time is not distinguished for its decency and good conduct in other respects, and that is not regarded with approbation and respect, even by those who follow a different course themselves.

Such being the ill consequences attending the neglect, and such the benefits resulting from the observance of the sabbath, it is certainly very well worth our while to learn how it may be observed most acceptably to God, and most beneficially to ourselves. The first part of this duty which offers itself to our notice, is an attendance on public worship, as regular as the circumstances of every one of us will permit; and there is no one so unfortunately

fortunately situated (except from bodily infirmities) that he cannot often attend it. And when we do come into this holy place, it is plain that, for the sake of others, we ought to demean ourselves with decency and propriety, and that, for our own sakes, we ought to join with serious attention and fervent piety, and not merely with the outward appearance of devotion, in those prayers and thanksgivings which have been appointed by our church, the excellence of which has never been equalled, and has excited the admiration of those who were not members of our communion. This is a part of our duty on the sabbath which we owe not only to ourselves, but to those with whom we are in any way connected; to our families, our neighbours, and society at large.

But the other part is not less important, and as it is a matter resting entirely with ourselves, we should, therefore, be the more careful not to overlook and neglect it. We should then make the sabbath a day to account with ourselves for our thoughts and actions—to reflect on what we have
done

done amiss, and by what means we may repair our transgressions—to consider what vices are to be corrected, what virtues remain to be cherished and improved. This is the way of observing the sabbath, by which we may most reasonably hope to obtain the favor of God. And yet we are not required to be minutely scrupulous, like the Pharisees of old, or like the Jews and Puritans of modern days, whose practices exclude works of Christian benignity and warrantable accommodation. It is this homage of the heart which will prove most pleasing to God—it is this scrutiny of ourselves that will be most likely to regulate our lives according to his will, and cause the prayers and thanksgivings which we come here to offer, to be accepted in his sight.

If then we have any gratitude towards our Heavenly Father, any reverence for his commandments, any dread of his displeasure, any desire of his love—if the sufferings of our blessed Saviour have made any impression on our hearts, and we feel

feel our hope animated and our faith confirmed by his glorious resurrection—if the Holy Spirit has infused into us his inestimable grace, and given birth to right wishes and pious affections—if we tremble at the approach of worldly calamities, and fear that awful enquiry, when nothing but virtue shall be of avail to prevent or mitigate the sentence of eternal condemnation—if selfishness has not usurped entire dominion over us, and we have yet some feeling for the wants of others, and would relieve our brethren from the hardships of incessant labour—if we would assist in dispensing the light of gospel truth to those who sit in darkness, and would strive to diffuse the knowledge of Christianity throughout the whole world—in short, if we are Men and Christians, let us endeavour to enforce the observance of the sabbath by our profession and practice.

Finally, therefore, in the name of God and his son Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, I beseech you to lay these things to heart, that henceforth
neither

neither indolence, nor indifference, nor pleasure, nor worldly business, may interrupt you in the performance of this indispensable duty—this most effectual means of grace, and most infallible method of securing the benefits of the redemption to yourselves and your fellow creatures.

SERMON

SERMON IX.

Preached at Stafford, at the Spring Assizes, 1799:



EZRA, 7 Ch. 10 Verse.

**FOR EZRA HAD PREPARED HIS HEART TO SEEK
THE LAW OF THE LORD, AND TO DO IT, AND
TO TEACH IN ISRAEL STATUTES AND JUDG-
MENTS.**

WITH what emotions of gratitude and veneration ought we to regard those great and good men of all ages, who, influenced by philanthropy, or animated by patriotism, or guided by the spirit of God, made it their study to lay the foundations of government in the original principles of moral good!—In vain would the all-gracious Creator have given to man the dominion over the whole earth, with all its productions—in
vain

vain would he have invested this new-born creature of his love with the majesty of his own resemblance, if he had not at the same time inspired him with the knowledge of truth and the spirit of counsel, and taught him how to regulate himself, to exercise his right and enforce his power. The first measures of man's government must have been simple, when the brute creation, incapable of resistance, were the only subjects of his authority; or when his own immediate offspring, bound to obedience by the ties of filial duty and affection, were all the inhabitants of the world that could dispute his will. But when the families of men increased, and began to spread themselves through the various regions of the world—when distance begat difference of opinion, and difference of opinion gave birth to variance, hatred, contention, and war, then the rudimental institutions of patriarchal government lost their efficacy, and were found insufficient to control the innumerable disorders which infested society. The necessities of mankind called for systematic restraints and encouragements, and the general welfare required the establishment of general
and

and impartial regulations. Perhaps from the creation, forms of government subsisted, all originating from the common Parent of mankind, and dilating themselves, and varying their modes as the increasing population of the earth seemed to require. And we may surely account it a great blessing, that in the infancy of the world the generality of men were not left to bewilder themselves in the abstract questions of law and government, but that God permitted persons of superior talents and acknowledged integrity, to rise from the mass of the people, who, by irresistible influence, might secure to their respective countrymen the benefits of civilization, of which they were already in possession, and procure for them such additional improvements as wisdom and experience suggested.

This was an office above all others honourable, an employment which merited and received the highest veneration. Whether as the promulgators of the revealed will of God, or as the improvers of the primitive forms of social life, these men exerted themselves to erect the fabric of the law on the

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basis of justice—whether they engaged in the management and discipline of the native powers and instincts of man, in the supply of his natural wants and the removal of his fears, or directed his strength to the acquisition of outward good and the resistance of outward evil, or represented to him the essential differences of right and wrong, or incited him to the study of himself, his own faculties and capacities, to the restraint of his turbulent and vicious passions and appetites, and the encouragement of his nobler desires—or whether, in after times, having found, like Ezra, the edifice of the law already constructed, they laboured as reformers in extending those institutions which were originally too narrow, or in systematizing those which were irregular—in defining with more precision the limitation of natural liberty according to social expediency—in establishing sanctions of greater authority for the encouragement of virtue, and the discouragement of vice; by whatever means they dispensed instruction and justice to their fellow creatures, and promoted their happiness, next to God, our warmest gratitude and reverence are due

to

to these transcendent benefactors of the human race. And whether we regard the intent or the execution of their plans, their characters will be recorded with the utmost veneration, and we may properly denominate them the vicegerents of God.

But if we would form a just estimate of the merits of the ancient law-givers and fathers of society, we must survey the fruits of their labours. Instead, therefore, of finding man doomed to seek subsistence from the uncertain supplies of uncultivated nature, lurking in the midst of savage forests, or hid among the fastnesses of barren mountains—instead of finding him unacquainted with the advantages of his mental faculties, sunk in the depths of ignorance, a prey to his own furious and warring lusts, and the victim of his own suspicion and jealousy, the foe of every one that interferes with his selfish gratifications, and the object of dread to his fellow creatures—instead of finding him connected only with a few of his species in hordes and clans, or the member of a petty state, where the chief business of life is to surprize and slay, and perhaps

to devour his neighbours—instead of finding him in an unsettled state, roving over the plains desolated by his own rapine, or sleeping inert and inactive in the midst of filth and want, and but little superior to the brute beasts—I say, instead of finding him in circumstances like these, we find him in those regions where civilization has advanced itself under the banner of the law, in full enjoyment of all natural and moral advantages. “Man goeth forth to his work and his labour until the evening.” The wilderness is turned into a standing water—the vallies stand thick with corn—the lions get them away together, and lay them down in their dens—the cattle wander in the fields—the earth brings forth her increase—cities are built for shelter and refuge—the arts arise and flourish—ships collect the produce of distant countries—science expands the mind, and opens innumerable sources of advantage and delight—internal peace secures him in the enjoyment of his possessions, and enables him to appropriate the produce of his industry—the marriage tie ensures his domestic comfort, and knits him in closer bands of love with his species—

species—his best affections are cherished, and all the feelings which unite for their mutual convenience and happiness subjects, princes, and states, are felt, acknowledged, and respected. Such effects flow from the establishment of law, not indeed equally and universally, because law is not equally and universally established: yet, every where the hand of God is visible, and the outlines of true government are to be traced in the most uncivilized and barbarous nations; even among the treacherous and sanguinary tribes that traverse the sandy desert, and the torpid and benighted inhabitants of the frozen regions. Rude, however, as the fabric of government is found in some countries, there are others where it has arisen in beauty and magnificence almost to perfection, and has become the wonder and admiration of all the thinking part of mankind. No man, indeed, who feels any love of order and regularity, any desire of peace and security, any glow of brotherly love and domestic affection—who has the glory of God for his object, and the salvation of man for his hope, can contemplate the glorious structure of a wise and virtuous

constitution of government with any sentiment but of gratitude to God, and of thankfulness to those who accomplished a work so salutary and important.

But as there exist in the world various political systems, and as they are severally productive of greater or less degrees of good, according to the measures in which justice is dispensed by them, it becomes a duty in those who have good sense, knowledge, and impartiality sufficient for such a discussion, to compare their respective merits, and to endeavour to concenter their excellencies. To enumerate, in this place, most of the opinions which have been advanced on this curious and important subject, and to mark the general fitness or unfitness of every kind of government towards the great purposes of society, would be equally difficult and unseasonable. Any one who would attempt this comparison, should look into the history of the world, and he will find such a multitude of constitutions of polity, that to resolve them into the elements of monarchical, aristocratical, or democratical

cratical power, and to consider them in their several modes, would be a work of the most tedious and complicate investigation. Without entering into particulars, it will be sufficient for our purpose, on this occasion, to draw a general sketch of the several kinds of law, their origin, nature, and extent, the knowledge of which must be the basis of all sound political investigation.

If we follow the arrangement of the ablest men who have written upon this subject, we shall find that laws are divided into three kinds. The first of these is that which is called the law of nature. This law consists of those eternal and immutable obligations of justice which exist in the nature of things, and extend their influence over every individual of the human race, and by which the Almighty Creator binds himself. This is that code of unwritten laws, the validity of which is acknowledged in all climes, under every species of government, and by all descriptions of men. The principles of this natural justice might be discovered by the light of human reason, without an

express revelation from heaven, and in this science the generality of men are able, with some exertion of their abilities, to make a considerable progress. It requires no uncommon degree of sagacity to perceive, that it is the duty of every man to live honestly, to hurt no one, and to render to every one his due—no sagacity to know, that whatever actions may be comprised under the definition of injustice, are crimes by the law of nature, and that murder, robbery, and defamation, with a variety of other offences, as well as all approaches and tendencies to them, are infractions of this law. To be convinced of this, let us place ourselves in the situation of the sufferer, and let us imagine ourselves the bleeding victims of assassins, the prey of robbers, or the object of gross calumny.

But though it may require no great degree of sagacity to discover the heinousness of all such crimes, yet it is certain, that the inclination which must lead to such a discovery would frequently be wanting, were there not a stronger principle implanted in our nature to prompt us to this exertion

tion of our reason, and this is no other than the instinct of self-preservation. But how well soever we may understand that such obligations do exist, and how much soever self-love may prompt us to submit to them, yet, in applying them to practice, we may be, and often are mistaken. Had our first parents retained their original purity—had their immediate descendants, the forefathers of mankind, inherited from them a frame of mind and body uncontaminated with evil, there would have been no need of any various sanctions to enforce the observance of this natural law. The world, like an innocent and virtuous family, would have been governed by the plainest and simplest means. But from that fatal hour, when evil entered into the world, blinded the understanding and corrupted the will of man, we have either been unwilling or unable to employ our reason effectually in the discovery of truth, and to ascertain the limits of right and wrong. Though the wisest of mankind have acknowledged the existence of moral good and evil, yet they often wanted some criterion by the help of which they might separate and distinguish them.

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It has pleased God, therefore, to make his will more directly known, and to promulgate that law which is denominated the revealed law. Accordingly, by the precepts of the Mosaic covenant, the enunciations of the prophets, and the still brighter light of the gospel, he has dispelled the mists of ignorance and prejudice. The purposes of revelation seem to have been to disclose to mankind those truths, which, though they might have been discovered by the light of nature, never had, perhaps never would have been discovered by mere, unassisted reason. In deducing natural law, man must be led by a very fallible guide; but in the law of God there is no such uncertainty, no ambiguities to perplex and bewilder the understanding: therein the limits of moral good and evil are exactly defined—express commands are issued—the most gracious promises of assistance afforded—the most glorious rewards promised—the most dreadful punishments denounced.

From these two sources, natural and divine, or rather from these two channels derived from
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the same source, spring all human laws, and they are intended for the punishment of greater crimes: so far they come in aid and act under the direction of the laws of nature and revelation. God, who knew how much stronger the passions which he has given to us would prove than our reason, has not left us under the government of them, and has therefore subjected us to the authority of the civil magistrate; in whom he has vested the power of dispensing rewards and punishments: that by the application of present motives, those might be brought to reason who would otherwise act in opposition to it. Hence we see, that in the commission which Artaxerxes, the king, gave to Ezra, he acted under the authority of the divine will, referring to the wisdom of God as the model of imitation. "And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of God that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God, and teach ye them that know them not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed upon

upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment." The powers of heaven and earth conspire in the punishment of those offenders, whom the God of Nature has branded with the mark of wickedness.

But beside this general advantage, human laws, when equitably enacted, have a particular efficacy. They are not only to be considered as furnishing us with a rule of moral conduct, not only as enforcing our duties towards God and our neighbours, upon religious motives, but as prescribing to us a rule of civil conduct, founded on political expediency. By human laws, men are bound not only to pay their homage to their Almighty Governor; not only to correct their private conduct, but also to promote the peace and welfare of society. And even things which are in themselves indifferent, may, in a social state, become detrimental, and therefore criminal.—Against these, it is the peculiar office of human laws to make provision. The bounds of social liberty are narrower than those

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of natural free will. Every member of a state must be confined within certain bounds, which, if he transgresses, he must become criminal, and according to the fair and equal laws, which prefer the public good to private convenience, he must be justly subjected to punishment.

Did men possess their primitive simplicity and unpolluted chastity of morals, human laws would be superfluous—the golden age might then, indeed, subsist—the dreams of Plato might then, indeed, be reduced to practice. But as long as we find men weighed down by prejudice—actuated by the most grovelling selfishness, uninfluenced by the sense of right and wrong—the enemies of God and his most holy religion, so long will it be found necessary to unsheath the sword of justice against those who violate the rights of society—so long will it be necessary to protect the unoffending by the shield of public authority. And if we inspect the conduct and motives of the generality of men in the present days, I fear that we shall find abundant reason to despair of any immediate and considerable amendment.

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Upon the whole, therefore, it may be observed of these three kinds of law, that they have separate offices as well as general operations: they are instruments in the hand of the Deity, which he has thought proper to use collectively; and as it has pleased him to found, permit, and sanction these several kinds, it becomes our indispensable duty to respect the principles of natural truth—to reverence the awful edicts of the Deity—and to strengthen and confirm, by our obedience, those human provisions which are the result of human necessity, and calculated to answer the various wants of society. And it is evidently not only our duty, but our interest (things indeed, which, if we consider actions comprehensively, and with regard to their consequences, can never be separated) to preserve that constitution, which, formed by the happy union of every kind of law, natural, divine, and human, has descended to us pure and uncorrupt.

The venerable founders of this constitution were not among those men who have dared to violate

late the principles of equity and mercy, or to set themselves up as legislators sufficiently qualified by the light of nature, and independent of the grace of God; and when, upon the careful observation of God's will, as communicated in the usual course of affairs, or supernaturally declared, they had established their system, they suffered it not to be obnoxious to the wild fury of popular opinion, nor to the tyrannous combinations of aristocratic influence, nor to the arbitrary innovations of unlimited despotism. Neither destroying the power, nor giving the preponderance to any one principle, they endeavoured to produce a constant equilibrium by a combination of equal powers. They framed the constitution wisely, may we know how to possess it in wisdom—they drew their knowledge from the sources of experience and the word of God—may we also have recourse to the same, as to the fountains of all true wisdom. And I cannot help observing, that such conduct is especially called for in the present age; that new motives have sprung up of late so thickly, as to have given cause of alarm to all considerate minds—motives so forcible, as to have

have called upon honest men of all parties and conditions of life to pay a due submission to the laws, both divine and human. For when a race of legislators (if such a sacred name can be given to them) has arisen, who, by their tenets, are laying up for themselves the execration of posterity—who have sanctioned rebellion against God himself, and have recommended the destruction of all those fabrics of civil society, which have been the pride and care of ages, and have openly encouraged treason and revolt, and have made the most daring attempts to disseminate poisonous principles, which tend to degrade and brutalize mankind, not to dignify and exalt our nature—and who attempt to bereave us of our best hopes as Christians, and dearest rights as members of society, and bound together as brothers of the same family—are not perilous times arrived, and is it not high time to espouse the part of righteousness, and to rise in opposition to the cause of anarchy and infidelity with an energy proportionate to the importance of the occasion? Let all those then that value a constitution, which, without the extravagance of panegyric, has

has been pronounced to concenter the peculiar excellencies of every kind of government—let all those who value the benefits which flow from a pure and holy religion, which affords to us instruction and consolation in life, and in death the glorious prospects of a happy immortality—let all such come forward in defence of that system which secures to us the possession of such blessings, and more especially let those among them, that, like Ezra, are cloathed with authority, “prepare their hearts to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach Israel statutes and judgments.”—Finally, let the solemn advice, which Moses heretofore gave to the people of the Jews, sink deep into our minds—advice, at this awful period, peculiarly impressive and necessary—“Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me. Keep, therefore, and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great,

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that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all the law which I set before you this day, only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons and thy sons sons." And may the Almighty Governor of the universe grant unto all of us not only the blessings of temporal prosperity, but also the glorious inheritance of eternal life, that we may be no longer "strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour."

SERMON

SERMON X.

Preached at Stafford, at the Summer Assizes, 1799.

MICAH, 6 Ch. 8 Verse.

HE HATH SHEWED THEE, O MAN, WHAT IS GOOD;
AND WHAT DOTH THE LORD REQUIRE OF
THEE, BUT TO DO JUSTLY, AND TO LOVE
MERCY, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH THY
GOD?

IT may be accounted a species of impiety not to believe, that the Almighty (who has introduced us into a world in which good and evil are promiscuously found) has set up on high certain marks, whereby we may be directed in our choice, checked in our errors, and conducted to our good. This benevolent purpose of the Deity is discoverable by the powers of human reason, and the light of na-

tural religion: it is also expressly revealed in various passages of scripture, as may be proved by the words of the text, which contain an unequivocal declaration of it, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;" and which also point out the course of life which it behoves him to pursue; "And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

In the sequel of this discourse, my intention is, first, to collect into one point of view the principal arguments, by which human reason is enabled (under the Divine assistance) to deduce the necessity of social restraints, of government, and law: afterwards, to enumerate the natural duties of man, as flowing from the eternal principles of justice and mercy, and affecting him as a rational creature and a member of society: and in the conclusion, to prove, by reference to indubitable facts and recent example, that the greatest good issues from the practice of these virtues, justice and mercy, when exercised under the influence of religious fear and humility

humility before God ; and that dreadful evils are accumulated on that people, who attempt to break through these salutary restraints of human conduct.

In this place, however, it may be necessary to premise two observations; first, that in the discussion of such a subject, originality of thought, and novelty of arrangement, cannot, perhaps, be reasonably expected. The proofs which are necessary, like those on which all essential truths are established, are of that fixed and steady nature, which the lapse of time cannot impair, and to which, perhaps, no other corroboration can be given, than the testimony of successive ages. We may contemplate the venerable structure of justice from new and various points, but no change of situation will alter the number, or destroy the identity of its eternal pillars. The other observation is, that though the truths which will be employed in this argument, are obtained by the operations of reason, yet it is not therefore to be supposed, that natural religion is preferred to revelation. For though we are

apparently able by our natural powers to analyse various questions of morality and religion, we must not imagine, that we should ever have possessed that power without the Divine assistance, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit: nay, it may be affirmed, that Christianity is necessary to this purpose, and that natural religion was imperfectly understood, till revelation had diffused true knowledge through the world. I conceive, that to attain knowledge, or, at least, to be acquainted with the uses of knowledge, it is requisite that man should walk humbly with his God, for the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." But whenever it has pleased God to lay open his dispensations to the serious attention of man, we cannot surely be counteracting his designs, if we endeavour to make use of the powers of reason to confirm the infinite superiority of religion.

Having premised these observations, that the tendency of this argument may not be misunderstood, I shall proceed to the first division of the subject, which is the enumeration of those arguments,

ments, from which the necessity of social restraints is inferred. *First*, We may assume it as an indisputable principle, that man is naturally a free agent. It is alone by this liberty of acting, that he becomes a proper subject of law and government, liable to rewards or punishments, as he obeys or disobeys just and lawful authority. It is to be observed, however, that this natural power of acting according to the impulses of his own will, or the dictates of his private judgment, exposes him to innumerable dangers, both in acting and suffering, which he is little able to guard against or to escape; and hence the necessity of his being subjected to the powerful restraints of natural justice and established law may be demonstrated. That this subjection is not only necessary to his well-being, but also to his very existence as a reasonable creature, will appear evident from the slightest view of his condition. In the first place, it cannot be imagined that the high endowments with which man is distinguished, were given him to languish in inaction, or, which is less probable, to be exercised only to his own injury, or the annoyance of others. On the con-

trary, it must be inferred, from the dignity of his nature, as manifested in his intellectual and moral powers, that he was designed for a state of discipline and order, that he might be rendered capable of pursuing the noblest purposes by the best and most direct means. Again, if we consider the excessive corruption of his nature, unrestrained and undisciplined by the regulations of society, or even as corrected by the influence of civilization and religion, how can we forbear concluding, that man of all creatures is the most disposed to abuse his natural liberty, and stands most in need of restraint from his fellow creatures? Or, if we observe the vast number and variety of his inclinations and propensities, which can only, when properly combined and regulated, be the cause of real good, and which, if suffered to proceed uncontrolled, would produce the wildest and most intolerable confusion, it becomes still more clearly evident that man was not born to a state of savage independence. And, lastly, a most forcible reason why there should be law and union among men, is to be found in the lamentable weakness of human nature, the infirmity
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of the body, the imbecility of the mind, the need and desire which every man has of the support and assistance of his fellow creatures. If, therefore, we would live securely, comfortably, and usefully, we must sacrifice a portion of our natural liberty: a sacrifice which can scarcely be deemed voluntary on our part, since the history of the world justifies us in ranking this among the necessities of our nature, to which we can as little refuse to submit, as we can refuse to satisfy our corporeal wants. It would be altogether visionary to consider our natural rights abstractedly, with a reference to individuals alone, and to suppose, that men ever existed in a state, wherein arbitrary will and brutal force were not, in some degree or other, repressed by the application of certain fixed principles of right reason and legitimate power. The notion, therefore, of a state of natural liberty, a state of unrestrained and unregulated freedom of action, is but a dream, and like every such delusion, replete with contradiction and absurdity. True liberty is of a different kind; it does not consist in the absence of restraint, "for those persons only," says one of the greatest authors

authors of antiquity*, "who live in obedience to reason, are to be accounted free; they alone live as they will, who have learned what they ought to will; those who give the reins to unworthy practices and pursuits, use an imaginary freedom to purchase real misery."

Secondly, The necessity of the restraints of government and law being thus established, the next object will be to mark the boundaries of social liberty. For this purpose, the natural rights of justice and mercy must be pointed out. Legislators, in the constitution of governments, have employed an immense variety of means suited to the different ages and countries of the world; and wisdom and virtue have united their powers in support of so great a cause. But the ultimate object of all statesmen has been the establishment of justice, which must be the foundation of all good government. In every scheme of society, this virtue must be exercised as the main instrument of exalting and purifying weak and corrupt natures, of preserving its members from those evils to which they are

* Plutarch.

most liable, and directing them to that good, of which they are most capable. Such is the power of justice, that its influence is not confined to the repression and punishment of injury, but is extended also to the augmentation of benefits, and reciprocation of kindnesses. In a word, not only the existence of society, but its strength, and beauty, and glory, depend on the observance of this virtue. To throw a stronger light upon this momentous truth, it is, in the first place, requisite that those rights should be displayed which arise immediately out of the constitution of things, and are antecedent and paramount to all human laws and customs: rights, which also imply duties, since, whatever we can prove that we have a claim to expect from others, that, by parity of reasoning, must also be due from ourselves. The equality of men, so far as it can be discerned, in their likeness to the Deity, in their similarity to each other, as to their faculties and powers, inclinations and affections, and even as to externals, entitles them to equitable treatment from others, and demands a suitable return from themselves. Thus far, only, is equality consistent with

with order and subordination, and claims the support and protection of the law. Again, all men are bound to maintain for themselves and respect in others, the rights of judging and acting, when their opinions and conduct interfere not with the acknowledged rights of other individuals, and the established order of the community. All men have also a right to expect, that no one shall attempt to turn them, neither by force nor persuasion, from the direct road of upright and honourable conduct. These appear to be the principal rights which accrue to men, considered abstractedly as rational creatures. Of equal force are the rights which they acquire from being connected with each other in society. Associated for the purposes of preventing or warding off evil, they have jointly a right to the participation of the advantages of such an union. In order to attain this end, they owe, and have a right to claim from others, a pure and undissembled love. For if the inhabitants of this world were not warmly disposed to adopt the interests of each other, and mutually promote all honest designs from feelings of affection, little progress

gress would be made in the useful arts of life, and the current of affairs would soon be stopped, or proceed with so sluggish a motion, and uncertain a direction, as very imperfectly to answer the purposes of society. The best designs which could be formed for private or public good would be ineffectual, if the authors, instead of being supported by others from regard and love, were left to depend upon single and desultory exertions, or on the imperfect co-operation of interested persons. Thus, no plan of an extensive and complicated kind, in the prosecution of which there might be difficulty or hazard, would be attempted or projected, if love did not unite the minds of men, and dispose them to disregard labour and despise danger. By the same train of argument, we are led to place the exercise of mercy among the more amiable duties of justice. As in the offices of love, we are but fulfilling the golden rule of equity, and shewing that kindness to our brethren, which is due from them to us; so is it in mercy, except that the obligation to the latter is stronger than to the former, inasmuch as the objects of mercy stand more

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in need of comfort and support. The acts of love increase the happiness of mankind, those of mercy diminish its misery. Nor can we conceive a nobler employment for the powers of man, than to shew mercy, to temper the severity of the law, to enlighten ignorance, to ward off violence and oppression, and to relieve sorrow and sickness, both mental and bodily. As peace is likewise necessary for the general interest, men have an unquestionable right to it, so long as they forbear interrupting the quiet of others. This peace, contentious men would disturb, this right they would overthrow; but the eagerness with which colourable pretexts are sought by them, for the justification of hostile conduct, is a sufficient proof that the invasion of peace is a breach of justice. Truth and credit complete the catalogue of the natural rights of man. For as language is the great medium of intercourse among men, it is absolutely necessary that our words should truly express our meaning. If men have not confidence in the truth and sincerity of their mutual professions, there cannot be that reciprocal trust and reliance, without which, all interchange of thoughts

thoughts and sentiments would be nugatory, if not pernicious and destructive. The most beneficial purposes must, in that case, frequently be frustrated by the uncertainty of engagements and promises. No coherence of plans, no steady performance of contracts, no unity of action, can be expected, if dissimulation usurp the place of frankness, and if equivocation and falsehood supplant integrity and truth. Again, the fair and honourable repute of a man is his most valuable possession: his credit is the great instrument of his advancement in the world, the support of his pretensions in all his attempts, the chief means of deliverance from distress, and the most fruitful source of solace in his affliction, and of enjoyment in his prosperity. To invade this invaluable right, is an injustice of the deadliest kind. It is a treacherous attempt to exclude a man from communion with his kind, and thereby to prevent him from participating in the common benefits and advantages of society. These natural rights contain the principles of justice, from which may be derived, by direct consequence, a subordinate system of rights, depending for their existence

existence on the usual circumstances of society. Such are the sacred prerogative of the sovereign, and the inalienable liberties of the people—the venerable authority of the parent, and the irresistible claims of the child—the indissoluble union of the married—the tenures of legal possession—and the privileges of rank: in a word, whatever rights cement civil government and domestic oeconomy.

This is that comprehensive system of rights, in supporting and securing and perpetuating which, the powers of government are combined, and around which the sanctions and the terrors of the law have been thrown up as a rampart and defence. And every government claims our admiration, as it preserves these rights inviolable and secure, amidst the clashing interests and adverse accidents of life. But it must, however, be observed, that for this purpose the mere abstract consideration of our natural rights will not be sufficient. For though these are the principles of action, yet in their application to the affairs of the world, they are so variously combined and opposed, so mixed, and sometimes

so overpowered with evil, that neither pure good can be obtained, nor evil separated from its co-existent good. The insufficiency of the human judgment impedes our progress in the discernment of right and wrong, and in many instances we find good and evil, to all appearance, so equally divided on both sides, that, to decide the question, we can only have recourse to experience. Hence experience may be accounted our surest guide; and those who vainly think that they can invent legislatures, and govern empires, without its aid, will find themselves baffled, in every point, by trifling passions and events, often small and unnoticed in their beginnings, but wide, uncontrollable, and destructive in their consequences.

Thirdly, To prove the benefits which issue from the observance of the original principles of justice, according to the dictates of religion, and the evils resulting from conduct of an opposite tendency, let us call in the aid of indubitable fact and recent example.

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In no other country, as in this, have the principles of justice been so carefully collected, and so intimately blended and interwoven with the whole system of the laws, extensive and complicated as it is. And such is the nature of our national character, as formed by an habitual obedience and regard to these real rights, and to God, who enabled us to discover them, that, speaking in general terms, we may boldly assert, that the laws are not framed and executed with more wisdom, integrity, and impartiality, than they are obeyed with alacrity, cheerfulness, and submission. It is to the long enjoyment of such laws, producing, maturing, preserving, and distributing the blessings of society, and to the exercise of that sound sense, virtuous feeling, and religious fear, which so much distinguish the great body of the people of this country, that we may attribute the indignation which has of late, to their everlasting honour, inflamed the bosoms of Englishmen, on viewing the unparalleled acts of injustice and rapine which France has deliberately committed in her own territory, and wherever else her
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arms have penetrated. And these flagitious deeds, so far from having been extenuated by any subsequent acts of justice, mercy, and humility, have been aggravated by the establishment of the vilest usurpation and the most ferocious despotism, by which the human character was ever yet disgraced, or the human race oppressed. On the other hand, it is from the influence of the eternal principles of justice, that the people of Great Britain have assumed the commanding and majestic character of the restorers of the long-lost tranquillity and honour of Europe. It is on these principles that they demand, not so much indemnity for the past, as security for the future; and seek, through such prodigious and continued efforts, not aggrandizement for themselves, nor their allies, but the real happiness and sober prosperity of those whom she has been compelled to call and treat as enemies. It is in support of the same cause, in support of our dearest rights, that we have successfully exerted ourselves in resisting our internal enemies, who have laboured with unwearied perseverance and undiminished

hardihood, to introduce the same dreadful scenes of anarchy into this country, which have laid France in blood and ruin; and that we have arrested the progress of rebellion, averted the overthrow of our long-tried establishments, civil and religious, and escaped the plunder and desolation which attend all sweeping innovations. It is by the preventing power of these principles that our reason has not been sophisticated, nor our hearts corrupted by a foolish, proud, and savage philosophy: a philosophy, which we have discovered to be as ignorant as it is presumptuous, when it would teach us that government can have any other foundations than religion and morality: as absurd as it is ungenerous, when it would induce us to forget our obligations to our ancestors, and disregard our duties to posterity: as delusive as it is barbarous, when it would persuade us to display our courage, by braving our consciences; our humanity, by wading through blood for speculative and contingent advantage; and our justice, by trampling on all established rights. And, above all, it is by the
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intervention of these principles that we have not yet, by a national act, denied the existence, and defied the power of our God, refused the gracious offers of salvation brought unto us by our Redeemer, and haughtily rejected the benign influence of the Holy Spirit: in a word, that we have "walked humbly with our God." These blessings, I repeat it, must be imputed to the observance of the principles of equity and mercy, tempered by a deep-felt sense of the weakness of man, and the power of God. There was a time, indeed, when the minds of many men, hurried away by the torrent of new doctrines, seemed ready to desert the principles of religion and virtue. But we have long had reason to congratulate ourselves, that the public opinion has undergone a revulsion, and that by far the greater part of those who had been misled, have happily resolved to return "to the old paths in which they had so long found rest to their souls." So entirely, indeed, have the weakness, the baseness, and the atrocity of the modern revolutionary doctrines been unveiled, that if any man remain

still inclined to adopt them, we must either pity his blindness, or shudder at his wickedness. We must not, however, relax in our opposition to the emissaries of rebellion and anarchy; since, as long as there are weak and unprincipled men in the world, so long it will be necessary to associate in defence of good order and religion. One thing, nevertheless, let us never forget, that we are defending a righteous cause, the cause of justice, mercy, and religion; and that, therefore, the means which we use should be as pure as the ends which we would obtain. We are waging war, not with persons, but with principles; and though we may be compelled, by a cruel necessity, to proceed with severity against our fellow creatures, let us not, in our just indignation, forget that we are but instruments in the hands of God, "to whom alone vengeance belongeth."

Finally, If we thus unite moderation with our zeal, and perfect ourselves in the discharge of the great duties inculcated in the text, we shall then
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most effectually perform the solemn engagements into which we have entered, as the vindicators of the insulted rights of humanity, and the guardians of real liberty, sound morality, and pure religion.

those efforts which have been made to
bring about a more complete
and efficient system of
education, and the
importance of the
work which is being
done in this field.
The work which is
being done in this
field is of great
importance, and it
is hoped that the
results of this work
will be of great
benefit to the
people of this
country.

SERMON XI.

LUKE, 15 *Cb. 11 and 12 Verses.*

AND HE SAID, A CERTAIN MAN HAD TWO SONS,
AND THE YOUNGER OF THEM SAID TO HIS
FATHER,—FATHER, GIVE ME THE PORTION OF
GOODS THAT FALLETH TO ME. AND HE DI-
VIDED TO THEM HIS LIVING.

THOUGH the parable from which these words
are taken, was principally designed by our
Saviour to convince mankind of the misery of de-
parting from God, and continuing in a state of
alienation from him, and at the same time to con-
vey the fullest and most animating assurances of his
compassion towards those who turn to him with
true penitence, yet it may also with propriety and
advantage be considered as exhibiting to us a lively
picture of the dreadful consequences of the impe-
tuousity and extravagance of youth, and as furnishing
ample

ample materials for admonition and exhortation both to parents and children.

The parable opens with an account of a certain man who had two sons, the younger of whom, with that proud impatience of wholesome restraint, and even of the mildest authority, and with that eager desire of untasted pleasure which distinguish youth, demanded his portion, and hastened to seek in other society that happiness which he knew not how to enjoy under his father's roof. In a distant country, freed from the troublesome interposition of kinsmen and friends, he began his new career of life by summoning the various ministers of pleasure, and instantly he was surrounded by the idle, the profligate and designing. To their directions he resigned himself with implicit confidence, and when by their artful adulations they had captivated his affections, and lulled his suspicions, they led him on to destruction an unresisting and unconscious victim. Under the influence of such advisers, his progress in vice was certain and rapid. And soon voluptuousness took full possession of his soul, suppressed every
virtuous

virtuous resolve and noble sentiment, and tyrannized with undivided sway. Every ridiculous humour, every corrupt inclination was gratified as soon as it arose, and to quiet himself in this career of vice and folly, all serious thought was overpowered by wild uproar, turbulence, and riot. In such a course of uninterrupted and unbounded extravagance, he soon wasted his substance, and experienced a sad reverse. "When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine, and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him." It is here worthy of remark, that in his first distress he returned not to his own land and his father's house (his pride was not yet sufficiently humbled) but he chose rather to make himself a hired servant to a stranger and citizen of a remote country. Behold in this instance the force of that stubborn pride of heart, which more or less prevents us all from frankly acknowledging our misconduct, and humbling ourselves before those

those whose well-meant advice we had slighted, or whose rightful authority we had resisted. A humiliating picture of the perverseness of the human disposition! In this abject condition, naked and destitute, pressed with hunger, and perhaps wasted with disease, how piercing must have been his anguish, how bitter his remorse! Would not such reflexions as these naturally arise in the mind of one so circumstanced? "Thus then are terminated all my fond hopes of that vast and unknown happiness which, though surrounded in my father's house with every real blessing, I vainly pictured to myself! The punishment is severe, but just. To what a vile and sordid state am I reduced, in comparison of which the condition of my father's hirelings is enviable. Alas! how wild has been my career, how empty my enjoyments! I have lavished my time, my talents, my fortune, and my health, in pursuit of fleeting pleasures, which have left behind them disgust and remorse, a degraded mind and a debilitated body; and now, in my utmost need, and after every sacrifice, I am deserted and disowned by all. But I will arise and go unto my

my father, even to my father whom I so cruelly forsook, and have so long neglected. But how will he receive me? With reproaches? I will bear them—I will not complain, for I have deserved them—I have forfeited my title to be received as his son, but perhaps he may entertain me as one of his hired servants.”—Having thus resolved, he is withheld by no false shame, deterred by no dread of well-deserved reproach, but goes immediately to his father—and how does his father receive him? Not with fiery indignation, nor sullen indifference, nor gloomy resentment, “but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” Was there ever interview so affecting, so mournful, and yet so joyful? With the truest delicacy of feeling, and the soundest judgment, he forbears to oppress the penitent with ill-timed advice—he warns not, he threatens not, justly concluding that a humiliation so sincere and profound, was itself a sufficient security against all future irregularity. Nor was this the only display of his tenderness—for no sooner had his repentant son

son said unto him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son," than, preventing all further speech, he commanded his servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost, and is found." Thus did this most affectionate parent not only disperse the apprehensions and soothe the anguish of his contrite son, but also inflame his gratitude and confirm his love by unlooked for honours and observance. Far different was the reception his brother gave him: as he returned from the field, he heard the sound of merriment, and learning the cause, was struck with envy, and could not forbear expressing his resentment, that a graceless spendthrift, though a returning brother, should be more joyfully and honourably entertained, than he himself had been at any time during a long course of strict and undeviating obedience. By a mean and narrow selfishness, and an arrogant boasting of his own merits, he betrayed the

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the founess and disgusting austerity of his virtue, if that can properly be called virtue which is untempered by charity and love. It afforded, however, another opportunity for the father's tenderness, whose love, it appears, neither the ingratitude and neglect of the younger, nor the pride and selfishness of the elder son could, in the least degree, diminish; for he mildly justified his conduct to the latter, by assuring him, that his love for him was unabated, and by pointing out to him the propriety and mercy of thus receiving his son, whom he strongly and beautifully represented as having "been dead, but alive again, and as having been lost, but as found."

The consideration of these circumstances will enable us to enforce some of the more important duties of parents and children.

Parents owe to their children, during the helpless state of infancy, an unremitting vigilance to guard them from external injury, to which, from weakness and want of experience, they are hourly exposed.

exposed. They owe to them, in this period of their lives, more than in any other, perhaps, constant opposition to their innumerable little froward wishes and peevish desires, for even at these tender years, children may be benefited by correction. By well-applied correction, in this their first stage of existence, many of their evil propensities may be checked and subdued, their aptitude to receive instruction in every other period of their lives increased, and the labour of educating them well may consequently be lessened. This appears, during infancy, to be the principal duty of parents to their children. But as the reason dawns, and as their minds expand—as their passions begin to unfold themselves, and their desires and propensities to multiply and gather strength, the necessity of giving these faculties a right direction, and regulating them properly, becomes more urgent, and the task more difficult. The most essential duty of parents at this period, is to impress the minds of their children with a respect for their parents and superiors, and especially with a reverence for whatever relates to God and religion, even though at present they can
form

form no definite ideas on such subjects. Such impressions are essential to education, and immediately produce a tractable and teachable spirit.

The chief instruments with which parents must work upon their children are their hopes and fears, and to call these forth sufficiently, they must apply, as occasion requires, correction and encouragement. In the application of these, however, there is need of great judgment. A due regard must be had to different times and circumstances, and the variety of dispositions. The froward and the obstinate can scarcely be laid under too many restraints—indiscriminate and perpetual indulgence to them, or in some particular cases, even a relaxation of the severest discipline will be pregnant with danger. But let it be observed, that their vivacity must be checked, their presumption lowered, and their obstinacy subdued, rather by convincing their reason, than blindly and impetuously overpowering their will. For if the parent merely opposes will to will, and rests on the right he has to the obedience of the child, presumption and obstinacy will only be
O checked

checked for a time, and will again, when opportunity occurs, shew themselves with additional strength. The most efficacious way of proceeding with children of such tempers appears to be, whenever it can be done with safety, after they have received a warning of the bad consequences of doing what they are bent upon, and in the pride and naughtiness of youth, that warning has been disregarded, to suffer them to proceed according to their inclination. For when once they have experienced the evils which had been pointed out to them as the certain result of such wilful conduct, they will clearly see and deeply feel the folly and danger of trusting to their own weak judgments, and following the bent of their own rash and undisciplined wills. And let it be particularly remembered, that children possessed with such dispositions, will be always struggling for the superiority, and that as often as they obtain the victory, either by clamorous importunities, or pertinacious sullenness, the authority of the parent will be proportionably weakened, and the task of governing infinitely increased. Such conduct too, is as injurious to the
children,

children, as it is destructive of the authority of the parent. And here let me ask such parents, whether it is so difficult to resist the peevish tears and whinings of an infant, or the unreasonable desires of those of riper years, that important duties must be sacrificed? Is it manly to give way to such a weakness? Is there any true tenderness, any sound judgment in it?—The severity, however, which is here recommended, must be tempered with frequent instances of endearing kindness and substantial marks of affection, that the children may not imbibe any thing like dislike or dread of their parents.

In regard to the other instrument of managing children, Encouragement—this also must be used with great foresight and nice discrimination. In commending and rewarding their children, parents must be very cautious, lest they increase the natural pride and petulance of youth, and lessen that respect and deference which it so much becomes children to shew towards their elders. By too frequently noticing the virtues, excellencies, and accomplishments of children in their presence, parents will

render those attainments less useful and ornamental, by weakening the desire of their children to increase them, and by inducing them to make an ostentatious and disgusting display of them. Another very necessary caution to be used by parents in the management of this instrument of education is, that children should not be encouraged in conduct which is not indisputably meritorious. For otherwise, the distinctions of right and wrong will be confused—their minds will be turned to pursuits which have the semblance of virtue without the reality, which, in truth, are either barren of effect, or productive of evil. But after all, the labour of parents will be in vain, if their precepts are not seconded and confirmed by their own examples. The characters of parents descend like a patrimony to their children, and in almost every family there appears to be a peculiarity of character transmitted from father to son through successive generations. Thus sentiment, rather than reason, governs mankind, and the wisest precept, if it be not recommended by the conduct of its author, has little influence on men.

Let

Let it then be deeply impressed on the minds of all parents, that as they would discharge their duty to God, their children, and their country—as they value their own peace of mind, their children's happiness, and their country's welfare, they must neither neglect nor imperfectly perform this great duty of education. For let them be assured, that their children are in their hands, as the seeds either of the happiness or misery, the prosperity or ruin, both of private families and communities of men, and that it principally depends upon them, whether brighter ornaments and firmer supports shall from time to time be given to a country, or whether the number of its enemies, the scourges of private life, and the promoters of public confusion, ruin, and disgrace, shall be increased. The trust is awful, but to no other hands can it be committed; and as parents are obliged, by the laws of God and man, to undertake it, they are also obliged, under the severest penalties, to discharge it faithfully. Of such vast importance (and if ever, certainly at the present period) is it to give a right bias to the understanding and affections of the rising genera-

tion, that too much care cannot be taken to prevent them from becoming the dupes of designing and profligate men, and to enable them, with equal spirit and discretion, to defend, as their best inheritance, all those principles and institutions, religious, moral, and social, which have been found, by long experience, best adapted to produce that degree of public and private prosperity and happiness, which, as sinful creatures, we are entitled to expect, or as imperfect creatures, are capable of enjoying. If, however, all the exertions of parents should prove ineffectual to produce habitual submission and obedience, let them, whenever their children manifest the slightest indication of repentance for having deviated from the strict line of duty, eagerly hail their return to better counsels and better pursuits, for thus will they prevent a temporary disobedience, perhaps the result of gay and lively spirits, rather than settled depravity, from ripening into confirmed and avowed rebellion. Nor can any parent, without the greatest imprudence and inhumanity, refuse to imitate the example of the father in the parable in its full extent; for surely to resist the pressing

pressing intreaties for forgiveness of their contrite children, however aggravating their conduct may have been, is both to resist the feelings of nature, which, in such circumstances, will plead against pride and resentment, and the dictates of reason and religion: it is to disown himself to be a parent, a man, and a christian: and, in a word, it is to act in opposition to the precepts and example of God.

But let us now turn our attention to that part of the parable which represents to us the consequences of an unrestrained indulgence in sensual pleasures. How natural a representation is the whole conduct of the prodigal of the impetuosity and self-conceit of the young! For though, from the weakness of their reason and the strength of their passions, their views of life are narrow and obscure, yet are they ever averse from hesitating and prompt to decide. Though totally incapable of self-direction, yet how eager are they to assume it! With what indecent contempt and unconcern do they treat the sober counsels and mature re-

flexions of old age, suspecting them to originate in spleen and disappointment, and in a wish to obstruct and contract their pleasures, and to inspire doubt and distrust, where confidence and reliance may safely be accorded. Full of this idle confidence in themselves, they let loose their imaginations, and store their future lives with many a glowing scene of happiness. Hence it is that parental authority, though exercised with never so much mildness, becomes irksome to them—hence is their disregard of all present sober enjoyments—hence their eagerness to escape from all control, however salutary, and however necessary. Inflamed with these notions, they listen not to any remonstrances or intreaties, but equally disregard the silent grief of the father, disdaining to intreat, and unwilling any longer to command, and the earnest importunities of the mother, and, like the prodigal, demand their portion and their liberty. O fatal impatience! to quit the security and protection of parental love, for the uncertain and ruinous delights of an unfeeling world!

It

It is common for the young to allege in support of their claims to the government of themselves, that it is advanced not from any dissatisfaction which they experience under the exercise of parental authority, nor from any overweening confidence in their own superior abilities, nor from any expectation of greater happiness when left to themselves; for they know, forsooth, the value of their parents' watchfulness and care—they know and lament their own weakness and insufficiency, and they are fully aware of the deceitfulness of the world into which they are about to enter, and that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Such are the professed sentiments of many virtuous and well-disposed young persons at their outset in life. But it is necessary to remind them, that in most of these particulars they deceive themselves only, for persons who have more knowledge of human nature and experience in the world will tell them, that the desire of independence is among the first and strongest inclinations of the human heart—that it is incorporated with the very being of man, and perhaps is never totally eradicated; they will tell them,

them, that however the young may disclaim presumption and self-conceit, such propensities must, from the degenerated nature of things and the corruptness of the human heart, be more or less powerful in every breast: they will tell them, that their acknowledgment of the emptiness, vanity and vexation of the world, is either insincere or self-deceiving, for they know full well that there never was, and never will, or perhaps can be, in the raw and inexperienced minds of the young, any thing like a settled conviction, that the world is treacherous and cruel—that its boasted pleasures are empty and unsatisfying—or that “man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.” They will tell them, that at this period of their lives, be their contempt and abhorrence of vice, and their love and admiration of virtue never so strong, their discernment never so acute, and their vigilance never so active, they still will need the provident care and judicious restraints of their parents.

But in what terms sufficiently forcible will they address those who, absorbed in selfishness like the prodigal,

prodigal, seek not to disguise nor to control their burning impatience to quit the protection of their parents, and rush to the unrestrained enjoyment of the pleasures of the world? Let these deluded young persons boast of their vivid and exhaustless pleasures—of their freedom from doubt, and care, and tyranny—of every countenance brightening at their approach—of their presence being the signal for joy and merriment—of their happy lot in having found the purest and most disinterested love and friendship in every one that approached them—and call on their monitors to retract their ungenerous suspicions and surly doubts of a world most unjustly vilified and cruelly slandered;—yet, if the steady voice of the wise and good can be heard in this tumult and din of passion, their advisers would persist in calmly representing to them the emptiness and infamy of their pleasures—their abject and galling slavery—the perfidy of their pretended friends—the hollowness of their expectations—the blighting of the fair promise of their youth, and the honour of their families blasted by the deadly contagion

contagion of vice; and in a tone still more impressive, would they tell them of their parents broken-hearted and bowed down by the weight of sorrow into an untimely grave. A melancholy scene! but such as too many of us have seen verified: in which (I shudder at the thought) some of us perhaps may have been actors. They would tell them of the inevitable consequences of such conduct—of the merited rewards of foul ingratitude and unnatural disobedience—of the world's reproach, and the load of infamy never entirely to be removed: they would tell them, that the lot of the prodigal is in *this* world scorn, and neglect, and hatred, and a sickly mind in a distempered body; and in the *next*, if true penitence atone not for their crimes, sorrow and remorse, insufferable anguish, and eternal death.

God grant that every parent may hasten to prevent such evils, by discipline, instruction, and example, and that all those children who have not ventured too far into the dangerous regions of wicked-

wickedness, may listen to the voice which calls them back, while yet there is compassion with men, and mercy with God—so that in the end, however the bright prospect of early innocence may have been obscured by the foul crimes of manhood, the brighter splendour of returning virtue may irradiate the decline of life, and give a joyful earnest of heavenly perfection and endless glory.



SERMON XII.

PSALM 19, *Verse 3.*

THERE IS NO SPEECH NOR LANGUAGE WHERE
THEIR VOICE IS NOT HEARD.

THE wonders of God in the creation are frequently the subject of description in the holy writings. In the book of Psalms particularly, they are constantly enlarged upon with the greatest eloquence, and praised with the warmest rapture. To every reflecting mind, they must indeed form the most convincing proof of the power and goodness of the Almighty Being. But it is in this as in other things, that men, for want of thought and consideration, neglect to employ their minds on these wonderful works, which so nearly concern them, and which they are called on to remark with the utmost attention and diligence.

It

It was once observed by a wise man, that if a person should have been bred up in a cavern, shut out from the light of day, from his earliest infancy, and in his riper years taken out of it, and suffered to behold the glorious light of the sun, and the appearance of nature so beautiful with curious forms and colours, that at a sight so prodigious to him, he would have felt all his soul transported with astonishment and delight, and found no words to express the overflowings of his joy. But that had he been made to understand that all this was the work of one superintendant Creator, he would have fallen down in humble acknowledgment of the wisdom and greatness of that wonderful Being. It is not possible for us, who have been accustomed to these sights every day of our lives, to be affected with the same strong emotions of pleasure at beholding them. But it is very possible that many, who have hitherto shut up their hearts, while their eyes have remained open, may for once become sensible of the mighty hand of Providence, when they contemplate the wonders of the creation. It is the duty of man who is endowed with reason and thought, to make
use

use of them in considering the works of that Power to which he is indebted for such excellent gifts. The good effects that will result from the performance of this duty, are well worthy our attention.

Love, adoration, and gratitude, are the feelings which naturally arise in the mind when it is thus employed. Had we among mankind a sweet and obliging friend, who should endeavour to supply us with all that we thought it likely we might be in want of—who should not be contented with merely procuring us the necessary means of subsistence, but even contrive to add all that could afford us comfort and delight, with what love and affection should we regard so considerate a friend? But God in his creation has done all this, and much more for us. To him we owe not only all that we enjoy in life, but even life itself. If we have, by our perverseness and folly, made a bad use of his gifts, and turned what was intended for a source of good, into a cause of evil, the fault is our own, and our love should not, for that reason, suffer any abatement. Our tenderness should rather be increased by sorrow, that we have so abused the good-

ness of our heavenly Father ; as would be that of a good hearted son towards his earthly father, if he had offended him by wasting his bounty in prodigality and excess. We are desired by the blessed Author of our religion, to love God with all our soul, with all our heart, and with all our strength. But how shall we be able to comply with this command, if we do not exercise our thoughts in frequent considerations of his goodness and mercy. It is not merely by reading the holy scriptures, or by resorting duly to a place of worship, that our hearts will conceive sufficient love for our Maker. We should listen to that voice which is heard and understood in every tongue and every language. We should often think in what a kind and wonderful manner the tenderness of God is displayed, both in ourselves and every thing which surrounds us—how nourishment is provided for all creatures as soon as they enter the world—how they arrive, by degrees, at the exercise and enjoyment of their several faculties—how (for man particularly) labour is necessary to obtain sustenance, and sustenance to support labour—how, at last, gradually, imperceptibly,

ceptibly, and gently, he sinks into the decay of old age and death. If we would sometimes call off our affections from the low and trivial pursuits of the world, and fix them on these fair and pleasant objects, the mind would return, greatly purified and refined, to the common employments of life, and be much less exposed to disorder and unquietness from any accidental disappointment in our temporal affairs.

The sentiment of adoration for the supreme Being is so nearly joined to that of love for him, that it is almost impossible to entertain the one without the other. We cannot remark any instance of his goodness, without, at the same time, being convinced of his power. His works are so much the more wonderful, as the manner in which they are effected is totally concealed from and incomprehensible to us. In any thing that is done by the strength and ingenuity of man, the means may be discovered and imitated by others. The works of God are performed in the most simple and regular method. The works of man betray his im-

perfection, by the laborious and capricious manner in which they are executed. Our Saviour made a most beautiful and striking comparison of a flower to a king. It is a short, but sufficient illustration to the understanding that will attentively consider it, of the excellence of God's wisdom. "Look at the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you, Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." When a man has reached the greatest height of human happiness—when he has surpassed all others in the attainment of knowledge and the gifts of fortune—when he is surrounded with all the pomp and magnificence of a throne, he is not to be compared to one of the least gaudy of those flowers which God has scattered in profusion over the face of the earth. The structure of the smallest plant is, indeed, proof enough to evince the divine power. But when we raise our thoughts to the system of the universe, our astonishment will almost be turned into terror. "He hath made the earth by his power—he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discre-

discretion." "When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth—he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures." But even these stupendous works cannot give us a sufficient conception of Almighty greatness. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest, and they all shall wax old, as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

The awe with which we should be struck at coming into the presence of a mighty prince, would undoubtedly be very great. How much greater then ought our awe to be, when we think that we are continually in the presence of so wonderful a Being, of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and that not only our outward deeds, but even our most secret thoughts are all open to his sight! What a reverence should this create in us! What

a fear of committing any thing that may be offensive to so just and holy a Being!

Gratitude to our Maker is a duty so evidently incumbent upon us, and so easily to be inferred from the consideration of his benefits, that it will be allowed by the reason and heart of every man. But it is not enough that we should shew our gratitude in word and in thought, but in truth and in deed—not only in the confession of our obligations, but in the performance of our duties. He who should declare publicly, that he received great favours from another, and yet live in constant opposition and enmity to him, would be thought not far removed from the inconsistency of madness. The man who owns that he is indebted to God for every thing, and yet is perpetually acting in a manner contrary to his known will and command, is guilty of equal folly. It is, however, most likely, that those who continue to disobey the divine laws, would not follow their evil course, if they would seriously weigh within themselves all the obligations

tions they lie under to the divine goodness. How could they possibly find in themselves the courage to use any of their powers or faculties, any member of their body, or contrivance of their mind, for purposes displeasing to God, if they remembered, that for the possession of every one of those goods, they had no other security than his favour? The reflexion on great and inestimable benefits, must necessarily produce gratitude; and gratitude must, in its turn, produce a disposition to please and obey the benefactor.

Such are the benefits that arise from the consideration of the works of the divine power. Let me then earnestly recommend it to you to meditate on them frequently and deeply. When you are alone sometimes, instead of suffering your thoughts to dwell on subjects of vanity, or on your worldly engagements, direct them towards the great fountain of all good. If your eye is at any time struck with a beautiful or grand and awful appearance of nature, do not forget to refer it to

the wisdom, and power, and goodness of its real author, and to consider how little business sin and impiety have in so fair and excellent a world. If your heart is at any time moved with delight or wonder at the ways of Providence, do not neglect to encourage in it the sentiments of love, reverence, and gratitude, for your kind and gracious Creator.

SERMON

SERMON XIII.

MATTHEW, 5 *Cb. 44 and 45 Verses.*

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, BLESS THEM THAT CURSE
YOU, DO GOOD TO THEM THAT HATE YOU, AND
PRAY FOR THEM WHICH DESPITEFULLY USE
YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU, THAT YE MAY BE
THE CHILDREN OF YOUR FATHER WHICH IS IN
HEAVEN ; FOR HE MAKETH HIS SUN TO RISE
ON THE EVIL AND ON THE GOOD, AND SEND-
ETH RAIN ON THE JUST AND ON THE UNJUST.

THE sermon of our Saviour on the Mount, is
a composition, which, as it was dictated by
divine wisdom and love, so it far surpasses every
effort of human eloquence on the same subject.
The purity of the precepts which it inculcates, and
the simple energy with which those precepts are
enforced, are evident marks of its heavenly origin.
It would be difficult to select any single passage
more

more eminently beautiful, just, and striking, than the rest of the discourse. As we peruse each particular sentence, we must pause with admiration and delight—with admiration, at finding to what a sublime point the doctrines of morality may be carried—with delight, at beholding that it is possible for such perfection to be attained by human nature. But it is in vain that we admire and applaud, if we do not determine to practice. Our blessed Lord did not teach to obtain the praise, but to purify the hearts of men; and those who content themselves with commending his doctrines, while they make no change in their lives, when he asks them for bread, return him a stone.

The duty of loving our enemies is, I fear, one of those injunctions which we most easily concur in decorating with the barren homage of commendation, and with most difficulty resolve to honour by the more substantial tribute of observance. There are too many who are so far from having attained to this fraternal spirit of Christian love, that they have not yet learned to view any of
their

their species with regard, but such as are attached to them by some tie of nature, or endeared by previous intercourse of kindness, or followed from some expectations of advantage. Some few even fall short of this necessary degree of benevolence, without which human society could not long subsist, and are of that unpliant fullness that yields itself to no tender sollicitation. From either of these descriptions it would be vain to ask for a compliance with this precept of our Saviour. It would be as if we should look for the fruits of autumn before vegetation had felt the influence of spring showers and summer suns. He only can be supposed capable of loving his enemies, who has been taught by religion to cast his eyes on all mankind as on one family, and the offspring of one parent—who can separate their vices and failings, and from the relation they bear to him as brothers, and from the consideration of his own need of pardon at God's hands, gladly resolve to pardon the offences of others.

Of all the glorious actions which are related of great men, there is nothing which so much exalts
our

our opinion of them as the forgiveness of enemies. When we are told of particular instances of wisdom or valour, we feel, indeed, strong emotions of reverence and wonder. But for the first quality, our reverence is often not mingled with love; and for the latter, as soon as we consider its baleful effects, our wonder is frequently turned into aversion. It is when we behold the hero who is superior to his enemy in prudence and in courage, nobly refusing to take the advantage offered by fortune, and dismissing him uninjured from his hands—it is then that we love and admire, and that our heart agrees to ratify the sentence which the understanding and the imagination have pronounced.

In the life of David, there is no action more deserving of applause than his conduct towards Saul, when chance had put that furious and ungrateful enemy into his power. The deliverance of the Israelitish nation from the dread of the Philistines, had justly rendered David a favourite with his countrymen. The winning gentleness of his deportment, and his fascinating accomplishments, had increased and confirmed the affection which
gratitude

gratitude had produced. But in the envious heart of Saul these qualities had no influence, or only contributed to inflame his jealousy, arising from the sense of superior merit and success. The virtues of the young shepherd were so many crimes in his eyes, and that power which had been secured by the courage of his servant, was employed as the means of his destruction. While David is soothing the disturbed mind of his master with the sound of music, a javelin is cast at him by the hand of Saul, with the intention of smiting him to the wall. But twice, by the providence of God, he escapes from his violence. The love of Michal, the daughter of Saul, is then turned to the object of his perdition. She is offered to him for a wife, with the condition that a hundred Philistines be slain for her dowry, in the hopes that he must perish in the attempt. When this effort of refined malice is unsuccessful, the enraged king endeavours to persuade his son Jonathan, the bosom friend of David, to slay him.

It is remarked, that wickedness often thwarts its own purposes, and when it is engaged in the perpetration

petration of any evil, produces the means of preventing the evil it intends. At the intercession of Jonathan, the persecuted and unoffending man is first reconciled to Saul, and afterwards, on a fresh eruption of his rage, is secured by the vigilance of the same faithful friend. After some time spent in all the vicissitudes experienced by an outlawed wanderer, he takes refuge in a cavern, where he is soon joined by his father's house, and "by every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented," and by the whole tribe of the disaffected multitude, who were rejoiced to put so able and so respectable a character at their head. But these, instead of encouraging them in rebellion against their king, he conducts against the forces of the Philistines. After his return from once more defeating this people, he is still pursued by Saul, who, in the course of his search, happens to come for repose into the very cave, in the inner part of which David, with his armed men, are concealed. What an opportunity of revenging past injuries, and securing himself from future danger, and exalting himself to future eminence,

eminence, by one blow, was now presented to David! "Behold, cry the men of David, the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee."

We are told, that in the first paroxysm of passion, "David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily;" but even for this trifling injury his heart quickly smote him, and he stayed his servants, and suffered them not to rise against Saul, gaining thus a victory over his own resentment, with which the utmost exertion of his martial prowess in the defeat of the giant Goliath, must sink in the comparison. Even the inveterate cruelty of Saul is softened by this unexpected instance of generosity: "he lift up his voice and wept," and even said to the man whose life he had so long pursued, "Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I rewarded thee evil. And now, Behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand."

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There are none of us who can reasonably hope to imitate those other good actions of David, which received their birth from the exalted and dangerous sphere in which he moved; but this virtue of forgiveness we all of us, in a greater or less degree, have it in our power to emulate. In the life of every man, there will be occurrences that call for its exertion, and he who should flatter himself that it was possible, by any regulation of conduct, entirely to escape the enmity of mankind, must have been sadly deceived in his opinion of the dispositions of his fellow-creatures. However, by a general inoffensiveness, or a studied compliance with the wills of others, the acrimony of opposition may be avoided, yet some casual gift of nature or of fortune—some superiority of personal or intellectual endowment—or some pre-eminence of situation in life, will hardly ever fail to provoke that envy and malice, an exemption from which is vainly attempted to be purchased at so dear a rate. And even on the supposition, that motives to aversion from every one of these sources should be wanting, yet there will still be found some who will turn this very harm-

harmlessness of conduct and easiness of temper, by which censure and dislike are deprecated and shunned, into a pretence for aversion and dislike.

Since, therefore, to have no enemies, appears to be impossible, the most prudent step to be taken for the security of our happiness and tranquillity, is the forgiveness of our enemies. It has been said, that revenge is sweet; but surely such sweetness is that of the cup, which, while it flatters the taste with deliciousness, conveys a secret poison that will soon convulse the limbs in agony, and close up the eye-balls in death. He who gives way to the impulse of just resentment, and gratifies himself with the momentary joy of crushing an enemy, will feel in his bosom the serpent of anguish starting up from the ashes of his extinguished passion, and stinging him with unavailing remorse. It is to avoid the danger of incurring these dreadful chastisers, that every one should strive to encourage in his mind an habitual disposition to forgiveness. Setting aside the obligation we find ourselves under

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to our Maker, from whom we every day ask pardon for our offences, on the express terms of not denying our pardon to the offences of others, this quality deserves our most serious consideration, from the comfort and satisfaction it will afford to our own breasts. The peace of that man who knows how to conciliate a foe by kindness, and who, in imitation of the gracious Providence that "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust," can extend the smile of favour, and open the hand of beneficence to those whom he knows to be ill-affected to him, may truly be pronounced to pass not only all description, but even all understanding.

If there is any thing, therefore, that can convert the rough wilderness of life into a delightful garden, it is this temper and habit of soul, which, bearing some resemblance to the power of the prophet in the wilderness, can cover the sandy barrenness of indifference with the cheerful verdure of

of love, and call from the flinty hardness of hatred, the living waters of affection.

It is thus that we may hope not only to secure those hearts which are already attached to us, but to gain such as have hitherto felt for us only indifference, and even to win over those who have always been accustomed to view us with aversion.

the young women of the nation.

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SERMON XIV.

THESSALONIANS, 1 *Epist. Ch. II. Verse 4*

BUT AS WE WERE ALLOWED OF GOD TO BE PUT IN TRUST WITH THE GOSPEL, SO WE SPEAK NOT AS PLEASING MEN, BUT GOD, WHICH TRIETH OUR HEARTS.

THE gospel proposes the most perfect rule of action which we can suppose man to be capable of pursuing, both in the example of its blessed Founder, and in the whole tenor of its precepts. Other religions have betrayed the secret of their human origin, by a base compliance with some of the worst propensities of nature, or by a conformity to the local prejudices and habits of mankind. The one or other of these defects is discoverable in all the various modes of Pagan superstition. Even the Jewish dispensation, if its divine authority had

not been clearly vindicated by subsequent events, might have been subject, in some instances, to the same imputation. Not so the religion of Christ. Superior to all temporizing considerations, it rests its basis on the eternal and invariable principles of moral excellence. It disdains to enter into any terms with folly or with vice. Confident of its divine support, it claimed from the first moment of its institution an unreserved empire to reason and virtue over the hearts of its followers. And as none of its injunctions are strained beyond the reach of human attainment, so it justly demands a full and entire performance of them all.

From these reflections on the distinguishing character of the gospel, it is not difficult to deduce one correspondent duty of its teachers "of those who are allowed to be put in trust with it of God." It follows as a natural consequence, that in the energetic language of the Apostle, "they should so speak not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth their hearts," that in all their exhortations they should maintain the same undeviating rectitude, the

the same upright exactness, the same honourable disdain of all concessions to the passions and humours of men, that so conspicuously mark the doctrine which they profess to interpret. In the exercise of the other pursuits in life, an occasional accommodation, if not to the vices, yet at least to the foibles of mankind, may be requisite, and, perhaps, sometimes laudable. It is the happy privilege of a minister of the gospel alone, that the track of his profession is so far from leading him aside into the mazes of artifice and dissimulation, that it prescribes the contrary line of conduct as an essential duty, and points out to him that course of frankness and simplicity, which is so delightful to an honest mind. Truth need never falter on his lips. He has nothing to fear from an inconsiderate warmth on the side of equity. He lies under no necessity of employing a mean vigilance to avoid giving offence to the captious, or a mysterious concealment to elude the search of the inquisitive. He may, without the affectation of singularity, protest against the contagion of fashion, when its dictates are not consonant to those of morality and reason. His object

is ever the same, and ever before him, open, firm, and unalterable, as the great and important truths of the religion he inculcates. Such are the advantages connected with the exercise of the holy function, and which it must argue a great depravity to forego for any motives of worldly interest.

But if the intrinsic love of truth is not a sufficient persuasive to rigid sincerity and manly confidence in the firm support of religious precepts, however contrary to the inclinations of men, there is another argument still more cogent for adopting these principles. It is implied in the words of the text, "as we were allowed to be put in trust with the gospel." A trust is at all times a sacred thing. To betray what is confided to our charge, must be considered as the greatest proof of moral corruption. The master who found the talent, which, on his departure, he had committed to his servant, buried in the earth when he returned, was highly and justly incensed at such an instance of thoughtless negligence. How much more violent would have been his anger had that talent been employed

employed in bad uses. Of all trusts, that of the word of God is evidently the most important that can be deposited with man. To be supine and indifferent in the care of it, is highly culpable—to pervert and accommodate it to undue purposes, dreadfully criminal. So that he who speaks as pleasing men, who excuses and palliates their vices and weaknesses, with the view of conciliating human favour, or deprecating human resentment, will be regarded as one of the basest apostates from his duty to God. In the ancient prophecies, the severest denunciations are uttered against those prophets and priests, who, by the smoothness of their deceits, ingratiated themselves for a time with the people, whom they led on from delusion to ruin, when, by a more candid exposure of their dangers, they might have saved both them and themselves from destruction, at the mere hazard of a transient personal inconvenience. “Therefore I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their words, and say he saith.” The menaces of divine
wrath

wrath may justly be dreaded by all, who, professing to enforce the language of truth and virtue, as promulgated by holy writ, descend so low as either to debase it with a mixture of error, or by a shameful condescension to pass over in silence the detestation it expresses of any particular vice. The offence is assuredly of a very grievous nature. It adds to the individual crimes of the traitor and the sycophant, a large portion of the guilt of those who are lulled into a fatal security in their sins, and remain unawakened to conviction and amendment. The man who removes the land-mark of his neighbour, does him but a trivial injury, in comparison of him who confuses in his mind the limits between truth and falsehood, and suffers him to overlook the eternal boundary by which virtue is separated from vice. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil—that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. As the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust."

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Never will such an accusation fall on the warm and steady advocate for the pure doctrines of revelation. When he knows of any fault to which those who hear him are most prone, the sin that most easily besets them, against that quarter he levels his most powerful attack. When he suspects any latent vice or folly, thither he directs his keenest search. No circumstances of time or place will restrain him from asserting boldly and unequivocally any tenet of Christian morality. By the infallible measure of the gospel, he estimates the criminality of every species of vice. By the perfect rule of Christ, he portrays the lineaments of every species of virtue. No motive of fear or hope can deter him from urging on his hearers, whoever those hearers may be, the exact performances of their severest duties, the unconditional renunciation of their most favourite vices.

It may be alleged as an objection against so strict an enforcement of religious precepts, that when too much is exacted, there is a chance that nothing will be obtained; and that men are rather driven

driven to despondency, than prompted to exertions by the sight of unattainable perfection. This argument, however, if it has any force on the point in question, is equally conclusive against the cause of Christianity itself, since our blessed Lord exhibited a pattern of moral excellence in his whole conduct, which it is the spirit of our religion that his followers should endeavour to imitate. But a little consideration is sufficient to evince its fallacy. It will be allowed, that perseverance in any sin, however inconsiderable (if any sin can be deemed inconsiderable) is extremely dangerous to the great cause of salvation. It is not, indeed, in the nature of the human mind to stop at a certain point of vice. Wherever the smallest tendency to a bad inclination is disregarded, there is fear that the evil may spread, other humours hitherto unsuspected gather to the same head, and in time the whole mass be contaminated. It is therefore evidently the part of the spiritual physician to watch the slightest indications, to arrest the first progress of an evil propensity, and not out of a mistaken tenderness to neglect probing the wound till it become fatal, and

and past the reach of his skill. There is real kindness in pointing out the danger as soon as any symptoms of it appear, and in the resolute application of some timely severity, which may prevent the increase of the disease, and supersede the necessity of more violent, and, perhaps, less efficacious remedies. If the patient shall shrink from the operation, and be less willing to suffer transient pain than lasting torment, the blame, as well as the danger, will attach to himself. That men will generally be driven from their duties by too high a demand on them for efforts of self-denial, or dispirited at the view of excellence, which they cannot reasonably hope to equal, is a weak and groundless apprehension. The fault leans commonly to the other side. They are much more apt to pause on their way, because they are too well satisfied with the progress they have already made, than because they are discouraged by an opinion of their inability to proceed farther. Or if there are some minds that are held back by diffidence, or cast down by despair, this is no reason why the precepts of virtue should lose any of their force and strictness. There
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are methods by which such tempers are to be treated. The severity of religious commands may, indeed, on many occasions be softened, without the least relaxation of their authority. An affectionate mildness of manner, as it is often the happy instrument of reclaiming the perverse, is always the surest means of encouraging the timid. The awful face of religion is not least attractive when it wears the tender smile of maternal affection. Here it would be inexcusable not to mention another corrective of this severity. But the use and advantage of *living* example are too plain to require any proof, and too striking to need any illustration.

Having thus insisted on one momentous duty of a minister of God's word, I am led to consider a correlative duty in his hearers. If the former is enjoined to speak boldly, the latter are of course expected to listen patiently. Nothing is more glaringly evident than the folly of those who take offence at the exhortations and rebukes which are delivered in the exercise of the ministerial function. If they wish to conceal in themselves some defect

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or viciousness, their soreness betrays a direct avowal of the very imperfection which they would be glad to deny. If they are sensible of their fault, and make no scruple of owning it, it is surely gratitude, and not resentment, that is due for persuasions and arguments to induce them to abandon what they themselves acknowledge to be wrong. But it is the property of vice and error, as to make their victims miserable in other respects, so particularly to render them impatient of truth. They have loved darkness rather than light, for the plain reason, because their deeds are evil. Let every man, therefore, observe, that at the moment he begins to be disgusted by religious advice, he may then be assured he has the greatest need of it. Should reason not be entirely dispossessed by sin, he will then accept the medicine, however nauseous, and he will certainly bless instead of cursing the hand which is stretched out to administer it.

To conclude—If ever there was a time when strictness and an upright confidence were requisite in the preachers of the gospel, as well as patience and

and docility in their hearers, the present time more particularly demands of each to fulfil these their respective parts of duty. The dangers with which we are threatened by an active and powerful foe, must prompt us to use every kind of exertion in our defence. To those with whom Providence has entrusted the reins of government, it belongs, to repel violence by courage—to counteract fraud by circumspection—and to quell treachery with punishment. These are means of exertion highly necessary and expedient in their way. But there are others also which may not less avail us. Obedience to the divine commands, manifesting itself by purity of conduct, and by submission to the decrees of heaven, will be our best bulwark. Without this, success is dangerous, and with it, even adversity is not to be dreaded. That those with whom we contend have been possessed by a fatal spirit of impiety, which is the source of those mad acts which they have so long been engaged in perpetrating, it is no presumption to aver, since it has been proved beyond a doubt, that to extirpate Christianity from the earth, was a favourite scheme with those wretched

ed men who are now contemplated as models of perfection by our deluded enemy—their wild doctrines, or rather delirious ravings, followed with implicit credulity, and their extravagant theories executed with blind enthusiasm. The sight of such infatuation, as it must strike our hearts with a mixture of pity and horror, so it should inspire them with an earnest resolution to adhere to the contrary sentiments of sober piety and rational virtue. Impressed with a deep sense of our dependence on a supreme Being, and convinced of the necessity of preserving inviolate our relative duties with respect to our fellow creatures, in maintaining these, let us seek for order, regularity, and comfort, as far as they are attainable in this transitory world, and by them let us aspire (through the merits of our Redeemer) to complete and everlasting happiness in the world to come.

SERMON XV.

Preached at Great Barr, on the occasion of a painted Window, executed by Mr. Eginton, being presented to the Chapel by Joseph Scott, Esq.

I BOOK OF KINGS, 8 Ch. 28 and part of 29 Verse.

HAVE THOU RESPECT UNTO THE PRAYER OF THY SERVANT, AND TO HIS SUPPLICATION, O LORD MY GOD, TO HEARKEN UNTO THE CRY AND TO THE PRAYER, WHICH THY SERVANT PRAYETH BEFORE THEE TO-DAY: THAT THINE EYES MAY BE OPEN TOWARD THIS HOUSE NIGHT AND DAY, EVEN TOWARD THE PLACE OF WHICH THOU HAST SAID MY NAME SHALL BE THERE.

WHEN Solomon had completed the building and decoration of the temple, he assembled all the men of Israel, that they might join with him in offering homage to the Almighty, and invoking his protection. For it would have been a

vain toil and useless expence which he had incurred, if God had not approved and sanctioned his endeavours. It would have availed little that he had subdued his revolting subjects, discomfited hostile powers, and consolidated foreign alliances, that he had offered a thousand sacrifices, and obtained from heaven the incomparable gift of wisdom : his power and sagacity, aided by the co-operation of neighbouring princes, and the ingenuity of chosen and unequalled artists, would have effected nothing, if God's will had not previously designated him for the office of building the promised sanctuary, and if, during the progress of the work, God's blessing had not rested on his labours. But the seal of his success was the manifestation of the divine presence at that solemn moment, when upon his knees on the brazen scaffold, with his hands spread out to heaven, in the midst of the whole nation united with him in prayer, he finished his intercession before the altar of the Lord. For then "the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord so filled the house, that the priests could not enter because

because of it," and the people sunk under the sense of the approaching Deity, and bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, "For he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever."

There are not wanting persons who, though they live in the midst of sensible objects, and may easily discover that the designs of God are carried on by visible agents, by the actions of men, and the usual course of events, and that religion has in all ages been aided and promoted by having the passions and senses engaged in its favour, yet would persuade themselves that they ought to live like spiritual beings in the midst of a material world, and to allow themselves no outward helps of devotion. And if men fully possessed the purity which the Christian religion requires, such assistances might be dispensed with, in the same manner as the ruder instruments which are used in the instruction of children are thrown aside in the days of maturer knowledge. Certainly it must be granted, that the difference between the means of grace and grace itself, is as

essential as that between matter and its form; but then reasonable and considerate men perceive, that grace is now to be obtained, not by an immediate gift of God, as in the days of the apostles, but by the sober and diligent use of certain means, which have been authoritatively appointed. Out of things indifferent (I might say, if it were necessary, out of things evil) in themselves, God can bring forth good, and not only can do so, but in the usual order of things, acts by such methods. He dwells in the upper regions of the universe, from which he beholds all things here below, and with unerring wisdom and gracious providence, controuls the affairs of human life, and makes every created object contribute to his glory, by promoting man's salvation.

From this benevolent intention, he commanded Solomon to raise that magnificent temple, which was the delight of all beholders, and the bare description of which must have filled all those who cannot have been admitted to the sight of it, with astonishment. Not that the gold and silver, the precious

precious stones, the cedar and the fir tree, the grace and sublimity of the architecture, and all its innumerable and gorgeous decorations, were in themselves valuable in the sight of God; but that by these external charms the passions of men were influenced, and the wavering and inconstant Israelite allured from the services of idolatry, and confirmed in the worshipping of the one true God in his appointed temple at Jerusalem. We know that scripture saith, "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Heaven is his throne, and earth is his footstool. What house will they build for me, saith the Lord, or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all things?" We know that the partition wall of rites and ceremonies, which separated the Jewish people from the Gentile world, is thrown down, and that the types of our Saviour are now fulfilled, and the ancient ordinances swept away. Yet, on the other hand, to prove that the use of externals is not to be entirely discarded from religion, we might avail ourselves of various texts of scripture, and, indeed, discover it by the plain deductions of common

sense. Common sense tells us that the building, the preparation, and adornment of God's houses are beneficial, because those persons who employ a part of their fortune and talents in such pursuits, perform, in a certain measure, their duties to God, their neighbours, and themselves.

They perform their duty to God, because the expence and trouble which they thus piously undertake, are strong, legible, and permanent testimonies of their gratitude to him, their adoration of him, their respect and reverence. By such acts, they pay the most acceptable homage which can be, short of a good life and an unoffending conscience. In the intercourse of men, if any person would testify to another his thankfulness and love, he does it by some valuable gift: if a faithful subject would evince his loyalty to his prince, it is by some precious offering or personal sacrifice. And if such be the best method of recompencing an earthly benefactor, who, perhaps, has enabled a fellow-creature to acquire the perishable riches of the earth, or preserved his life from imminent destruction,

tion, which soon may be lost by a more fatal accident—or led him through the dangers of infancy and inexperience, and brought him up to man's estate, that is, to a series of weariness, disappointment, and misery (for such, alas! is human life) or, at the very best, has infused into his darkened soul a ray of religious hope and consolation, which may soon be obscured by the black suggestions of infidelity and despair: Surely then this, if it be the best method of expressing gratitude in such cases, should also be adopted towards our heavenly Benefactor, our King, our Father, our God, who created us, who preserves us, who leads us on to eternal happiness! Surely the gold is not ill expended which promotes the glory of such a Being—surely the talent is not misapplied, which is thus used, like the treasures of Solomon, “to beautify the place of the sanctuary of the King of kings—to make the place of his feet glorious.” “Such kind of bounteous expences,” says the illustrious Hooker, “have a natural conveniency, since thereby we not only testify our cheerful affection to God, which thinks nothing too dear to be bestowed about the
furniture

furniture of his service, but give testimony to the world likewise of *his* almightiness, whom we honour with the chiefest of outward things, as being of all things himself incomparably the greatest. To set forth the majesty of kings, his vice-gerents here below, the most gorgeous and rare treasures that the world can afford are procured, and can we suppose that God will be pleased to accept, what the meanest of these would disdain?"

They perform, in the second place, their duty to their neighbours; for, as the same author goes on to observe, "Though the true worship of God be to God in itself acceptable, who respects not so much in what place, as with what affection he is served; yet manifest it is, that the very majesty and holiness of the place where God is worshipped, hath, in regard of man, great virtue, force, and efficacy, as it is a sensible help to stir up devotion, and in that respect bettereth, no doubt, his holiest and best affections of that kind." They, therefore, that add to the decency and beauty of holy places, do much toward recalling the infidel and increasing the

the piety of the true believer: for any one that has taken observation of the motives by which men are usually governed, must perceive that where the passions and senses are previously flattered, much of the labour of persuasion is prevented, and that a favourable predisposition will effect more than long admonition and the soundest arguments. The imagination and senses may indeed be abused and engaged on the wrong side: the licentious and designing part of the world, the enthusiast and incendiary, know this well enough, and too often avail themselves of their knowledge. The more reason is there that those institutions which are formed according to the principles of truth, and have gained the approbation of the good and judicious part of mankind, should also be cloathed in dignity and majesty, that they may command the respect and reverence of the undistinguishing multitude. Nor should we call that feeling a weakness, if, when we enter into one of those magnificent and awful fabrics, consecrated to religious services, which in so many parts of this land rear their venerable

able forms, and when we behold the sumptuous decorations of the place, and the decency and dignity reigning in every part, we are led imperceptibly, as it were, to the contemplation of that Being, who, in the temple of the heavens, listens to the adoration and praise of his holy angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, and of infants who have died in their innocence. So far from accounting this a feeling of superstition or enthusiasm (I mean when it is duly limited) it may be supposed, on the contrary, that they who can stand unconcerned in such a scene, must either have some bad passions in their hearts which prevent them from entering into the more refined pleasures, or must be possessed with the absurd vanity of some philosophers of old, who would have persuaded themselves that they were superior to the passions and infirmities of their fellow-creatures, or, at least, that they must have hearts of impenetrable texture, and incapable of admitting the finer feelings of human nature. Such apathy is the very reverse of the pious rapture of the Psalmist, "O how amiable
(says

(says he) are thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts: my soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord."

Moreover, independently of the general advantages which may be derived from the decorous embellishment of the buildings appropriated to religious worship, particular uses may be made, in many instances, of the ornaments themselves. Oftentimes the most striking events recorded in sacred history, and those which are replete with the most salutary instruction, are pourtrayed by the pencil of the artist. Thus the deeds of holy men are, as it were, re-acted in the most natural and lively resemblances, and even the agony, the humility, the love and fortitude of our Redeemer, become present to our imaginations and familiar to our feelings. And thus that effort* of the painter's ingenuity which has given occasion to the present discourse, will, I trust, be the permanent source of pious thoughts and virtuous resolutions to us, who, on every re-

* The subject of the painting is an Angel introducing the Spirit of a Child into the presence of the Almighty, taken from a well-known picture by the Rev. Mr. Peters.

turning Sabbath, shall contemplate it, and to our posterity who shall hereafter succeed into our places. Jesus Christ said in a tone of displeasure to his disciples, who would have rebuked them who brought young children to him, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Can we then look upon the representation of a child (like one of those who were taken into the arms of our Lord and Saviour) wasted into the presence of the Deity by an holy angel, without enquiring whether we bear such qualities in ourselves, as will render the future condition of those who have prematurely died, happy and immortal? Have we, like them, simplicity and candour, inoffensiveness and love, purity and innocence? Have we not rather need, "when we read in them the story of our own infancy, and conjecture what those days were which we cannot remember, to sigh when we see what innocence we have outlived? Children are like to Adam before his fall: they are happy, because they have known no evil, and have not taken measures, by sin, to be acquainted with misery.

misery. Children are the Christian's example." If we would follow it, we must retrace the steps by which we have wandered from our early virtue: we must become again new-born in righteousness, and, with regard to wickedness, relapse into our childish ignorance and enviable inexperience.

Upon the whole then, those persons are performing no mean service to their neighbours, who allure them to their good, and throw every innocent delight into the ways of religion, which, notwithstanding, will appear thorny enough to all who are governed by their unregenerate and corrupted hearts.

They also, in the third place, are discharging their duty to themselves. And, unquestionably, whoever render due worship to God, and perform a good turn to their neighbours, serve their own interest, and use their talent beneficially to themselves. And whether that part of their fortune which is not consumed in procuring the necessaries and comforts of life, nor distributed in charitable offices, nor devoted as a provision for the children
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of their household—whether that portion of their substance which might otherwise be wasted in unmeaning and criminal profusion, would not be better realized in this manner, and, in the words of the scripture, “lent to the Lord,” let any one judge. Every man is certainly accountable for the disposal of the riches, and the exercise of the talents, which have fallen to his lot; and though the mere giving of alms, and the munificence of those who decorate God’s houses, will not compensate for any want of real charity and righteousness, much less wipe away sins of a dark die and enormity; yet they will, if done on right principles, be a just, charitable, patriotic, and pious disposition of their superfluities, and therefore will assuredly meet a due reward.

Reasoning like this proves the merit of such actions in all periods of the world; but at this crisis we have especial cause to look upon them as meritorious. For so far from perceiving a spirit of reverence towards the temples of God prevalent in Christendom, we may behold churches desecrated and converted to uses the most profane—we may behold them sacrilegiously devoted to the reception of

of the statues of the avowed contemners, the impious blasphemers, and desperate foes of revealed religion. Mythological legends again solicit belief, images are dedicated to abstract ideas, idols would stand like Dagon before God's altar. But the tumultuous wickedness of man is of little avail against the still and immutable counsels of God. Such gods, like that false one of the Philistines, cannot long stand where the ark of the true God has rested. Even already we have reason to hope, that in the land where these enormities have happened, religion will soon be reinstated, the ministers of Christ recalled, and the temples of God cleansed from pollution, and restored to their pristine comeliness, beauty, and magnificence.

Since, however, such calamities have happened in another country, it behoves us to be careful, lest a similar desolation should overspread the sanctuaries of this land—lest the spirit of infidelity should make us also to sin, and offer sacrifice in the high places of idolatry. We have every cause, which the dictates of reason and the assurances of religion

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can afford, to expect, that if we pray with the solemnity and ardour of Solomon, a like blessing will attend this humble house of prayer, as dwelt upon the high temple of Jerusalem: not indeed that the glory of the Lord shall visibly descend among us, but that his grace shall enter into our hearts, and enable us to perform those conditions on which alone we can hope for his countenance and favour, his blessing and protection. On the other hand, when God hallows this building with his invisible presence (as we verily believe he does at this moment, since all the universe cannot contain him, but every particle of space is filled with his being) we must remember, that the same conduct which was exacted from Solomon, is also required from us. "If ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes, which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them, and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and Israel shall be a proverb and a bye-

a bye-word among all people: and at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished and shall hiss, and they shall say, Why hath the Lord done thus to this land and this house? And they shall answer, *Because they forsook the Lord their God.*" Such a denunciation and curse, such a threat of the withdrawing of God from his people, is of more dreadful import, than perhaps may at first appear. For if ever religion shall be extinguished among us, then farewell to all wisdom and knowledge—all honesty and good faith—all love and happiness: then shall the foundations of society be torn up—then shall the order of the world be out of course—then shall chaos come again, and darkness, moral and intellectual, overspread the miserable inhabitants of the earth.

Be wise, therefore, my brethren, in time, and avert such evils. When the liberality and munificence of the patron, and the ingenuity and skill of the artist, have rendered the church of God decent and beautiful, make the full use of such advantages; let your attendance here be constant and regular;

and when you are here, let those impressions which are produced by the skill of man, tend all to promote the glory of God: give way to your admiration, but be careful that you fix it on the right object, on God, who alone can inspire man with counsel and ability, with beneficence and love. All the glories of man, whether the magnificence of thrones, the pomp of palaces, or the solemnity of temples, will give you but a faint image of the glory of him who sitteth on his throne, "round about which," according to the vision of St. John, "there is a rainbow, in sight like unto an emerald, and out of which proceed lightnings, and thunders, and voices, and before which a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues, do worship and cry with a loud voice, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb, for ever and ever."

But though, in comparison of God's greatness, earthly splendour is trifling and inconsiderable, yet from this the lowest measure in the universe, we
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derive all the ideas we can form of the highest, the degree of heavenly grandeur. And if such be the Being, to whom you are excited to raise your thoughts by the solemnity of this sacred place, think also how lowly and reverent your demeanour ought to be—how warm and affectionate your thanksgivings—how humble and submissive your supplications! Neither is this all. That which is called in scripture the edification of the inner man, is yet to be performed. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man’s work shall be manifest. For the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man’s work, of what sort it is.” Words originally addressed to the Judaizing Christians, but which may also be considered as prophetic of that day of final judgment,

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when every man's fate shall be decided according to his inward righteousness. Let not, therefore, your adorning be outward, like that of the frail and mouldering temples of the earth, but let it be the hidden grace of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, a meek and quiet spirit, a pious and charitable heart, a pure and ardent faith.

To conclude—Let every one who reverences his God, who loves his neighbour and regards himself, join fervently with me in prayer, in the appropriate form and words of Solomon among the people of Israel. "Have respect to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee: that thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldst put thy name there. Hearken, therefore, unto the supplications of thy servant and of thy people, which they shall make in this place: hear, thou, from thy dwelling place, even from heaven, and when thou hearest, forgive our weakness, and strengthen our resolves.

resolves. Now, my God, let (I beseech thee) thine eyes be open, and let thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place. Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness, not only here, but in the temple of God, which shall be opened in heaven for ever and ever."

Now, O God, let (I beseech thee)
mine eyes be open, and let me see
the power that is wrought in this place. Now, O God,
let me see the effect of thy blessing upon
be clothed with salvation, and let thy righteousness
in goodness, not only here, but in the temple
of God, which shall be glorified in the world for ever
and ever.